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PERSONAL PRACTICAL THEORIES:
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE TEACHER EXPERIENCES AND BELIEFS IN THE
INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate in
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ABSTRACT

The dominant model of teaching has shifted from a transmission model to an interpretive model with a concomitant focus on the role of teacher experiences and beliefs. This topic is explored from the perspective of six English as a Foreign Language teachers in Armenia. These teachers originally trained in Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia with a transmission model of teaching with a strong emphasis on grammar and translation. They later completed a three-term Teaching English as a Foreign Language Certificate programme at a Western-sponsored graduate university in Armenia with a more interpretive model of teaching with a strong communicative language teaching orientation. The main research questions are:

1. How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?
2. What are the influences that shape personal practical theories?
3. To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?

Interpretive analysis of e-mail interviews, classroom observations, and in-person interviews reveals that a variety of experiences and beliefs inform personal practical theories, including formal pedagogical education, personal experiences of language learning and teaching, personal beliefs and values, and the sociocultural context. Theory has several important roles to play in personal practical theories: it can offer explanations of experiences and practices as well as articulations of them, and it can offer directions for practices as well as hypotheses to test. Uptake of theory occurs through transmission, application, and critical reflection, all requiring interpretation. Classroom practices often, but not always, reflect personal practical theories. More experienced and more articulate teachers appear to have more coherent personal practical theories that are more consistently reflected in classroom practices.

There are several implications for language teacher education programmes. Theory has a role to play in language teacher development. Teachers who voluntarily choose to engage in development are more likely to profit from it. Teachers need to become aware of what they do and don’t know. Teachers need to be autonomous in order to successfully adopt new practices. A professional community offers support to teachers. These implications are linked through a view of the teacher as an autonomous individual able to understand theory and practice as evidenced by the ability to articulate and integrate them in a personal practical theory reflected in effective classroom practices.
DEDICATION

FOR MY PARENTS

ANAGENE DeWITT FERYOK
23 January 1930 – 7 August 2003

and

JOHN FERYOK
6 February 1923 – 27 January 2003
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The building which housed the university was set back from the street, making its many stories appear even more imposing. The street itself was broad and straight, a Soviet street, now even more pot-holed after another Armenian winter, that of 1999.

The university was one of the so-called ‘private’ universities that sprang up after Armenian independence in 1991. It was not in any better repair than the street: peeling paint, missing floor tiles, and shattered windows; damaged chalkboards, chairs, and desks. There was no running water. There was electricity, and had been for several years, but earlier, shortly after independence and during the conflict with neighbouring Azerbaijan, that too had been in short supply. Basic food had been in short supply those years as well. But even in the darkest years, when there was little food, less water, and no electricity, heat, gasoline, jobs, and money, schools, institutes, and universities kept their doors open as best they could. Teachers taught and students learned.

I was at the university that day to observe one of my Practicum students. Armine was a recent graduate of the university; in fact, she had been hired to teach English well before her graduation. She had, at most, several years experience. Besides teaching, she was enrolled in a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Certificate programme at another university which was founded and funded by a variety of private, public, and official Western organizations, some with strong ties to the Armenian diaspora community. Although she had learned about and practiced using communicative approaches in her TEFL courses, she had not yet tried them in her own classroom. The textbook was an old Soviet textbook; it had grammar-translation exercises and practice drills requiring verb transformations based on readings about a Soviet businessman showing a duly impressed British delegation around the Soviet Union. On this day, after having the students write the drills and then practice them aloud, Armine had the students close their books. She then put the students into groups. Each group had a leader, recognizable as the strongest student in the group, who received slips of paper with various questions to read aloud. The questions could be answered with the sentence transformations the students had just completed, and when mistakes were made the
group leader indicated there was an error, and if necessary, corrected it herself. The students were quite happy with the lesson; several complimented their teacher on the innovation she had introduced, and asked if they could do it again.

In her lesson plan and in our post-observation discussion Armine described this as a communicative activity. To her, the fact that, except for the group leaders, the students were producing oral language directed at each other without reading made it communicative; it was meaningful because the sentences were related to business, which the students might eventually find useful.

This brave step away from an open textbook and a teacher-fronted class was indeed a step in the right direction from the perspective of the TEFL programme, with its explicit goal of introducing communicative approaches, and of the Practicum course in particular, with its explicit goal of observing if students were trying a communicative approach. The problem (if indeed it was a problem) was the gap between the understanding the teacher had of her classroom practices and the teaching method she thought she was implementing.

As we discussed the lesson I began to feel uneasy: it hadn’t really been a communicative lesson, but it had felt like a successful lesson. The teacher was satisfied and, perhaps more importantly, the students were satisfied. The lesson had certainly been well-organized and well-managed, and it seemed to have met the purposes of both teacher and students. Nonetheless it did not appear to have met some purpose—but what? What was my purpose, what was the Practicum’s purpose, what was the TEFL programme’s purpose? Was it to instil a certain approach or just develop teaching practices in general? And how was an approach related to teaching practices? What was Armine’s purpose? What were her students’ purposes? How were all these questions related to each other? My uneasiness crystallized into doubt. It was not Armine who needed explanations; it was me.

The purpose of this study, then, is to look for answers to the questions I had as Armine’s practicum mentor. In that role I saw a teacher working under constraints: an out-of-date textbook based on grammar-translation, a school administrator who made unannounced classroom visits ostensibly to collect the attendance roll, and several uninterested and uncooperative young men enrolled at a university only in order to avoid military service. At the same time I saw a teacher making use of resources: designing new activities for the textbook,
recreating her own positive learning experiences, and engaging her students’ varying interests and natural curiosity. I also saw a teacher professionally balancing those constraints and resources: reflecting on how to apply what she was learning in the TEFL programme, weighing her own interests and inclinations against stakeholder expectations, and maintaining a well-managed classroom conducive to teaching and learning. I saw all this sitting at a broken desk which was fixed to the floor, from where I occasionally looked out a very dirty window that would not properly close. I would gaze over the roofs of grey Soviet apartment blocks, along a broad street where the trams rattled noisily, towards the market spilling out of the virtually defunct train station, to see Mt. Ararat across the closed border with Turkey. Thus when I returned my gaze to Armine, I saw a teacher who also saw Mt. Ararat: symbol of Armenia’s glorious ancient past, tragic modern history, and uncertain current situation. I saw a teacher in a classroom in a culture where love and respect for language and learning had existed for thousands of years. I saw a teacher, historically and socially and culturally situated yet strongly individualistic, who wanted to learn about new ideas by understanding theories as well as trying practices.

It is this last point that framed my curiosity about explanations for what I saw occurring in Armine’s classroom. Although all of the TEFL Certificate students were most excited about new ideas for the practice of teaching, enjoyed trying out new techniques, and reflected intently on their success and suitability, they also had due respect for theory. Many of the TEFL Certificate students were genuinely interested in learning about and discussing subjects like the natural method, psycholinguistic reading models, and universal grammar. This degree of respect for theory has not often been reflected in the recent literature on pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes. However, respect for theory did not necessarily successfully inform practices, as this vignette and much of the recent literature suggest. Nonetheless, this group of students, like me, seemed to find theory interesting and useful—but in what way? We all, to varying extents, enjoyed the traditional classroom where I could lecture and question and they could listen and answer; at the same time we all, to varying extents, recognized that our work as language teachers revolved around practices. And because I was also teaching English as a Foreign Language in writing and speaking courses, our discussions sometimes involved explorations of whether interlanguage variability had anything at all to do with how Vahe could use embedded structures but had little control over subject-verb
agreement; if language interference had anything at all to do with why students from Russian schools seemed to have less trouble with articles than students from Armenian schools; and how in the world could we motivate those draft-dodging boys flipping through sports magazines at the back of the room. Discussion of theory devolved to discussion of practice devolved to discussion of personal experience.

Therefore the overall aim of this investigation is to seek explanations of one of the broadest issues in second language pedagogy—how one learns to teach. It will do this by exploring the experiences and beliefs of a group of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers educated in Armenia. These teachers were first educated in Soviet and post-Soviet undergraduate English language programmes which prepared students for careers in translation and teaching. These programmes, even after Armenian independence, presented Soviet language teaching pedagogy. The teachers later enrolled in a three-semester TEFL Certificate programme offered by a Western-sponsored graduate university. This programme presented Western teaching methods and practices, and had a communicative language teaching orientation. Thus the participants of this study were exposed to two different perspectives on teaching EFL. This is an opportunity to see how these different perspectives influenced their teaching beliefs and practices. In particular, this investigation will seek to answer the research questions:

i) How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?
   ii) What are the influences that shape personal practical theories?
       (a) What is the role of theory, both source and local, in personal practical theories?
       (b) What is the role of personal experience, beliefs and values in personal practical theories?
       (c) What is the role of sociocultural context in personal practical theories?
   iii) To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?

It will therefore look at the beliefs that make up personal practical theories. This investigation will consider what the participants understand about their personal experiences of and espoused beliefs about learning language and language teaching, including their beliefs about the methods and purposes of teacher development programs (both Soviet and Western), and the source and local theories presented in those programs. These beliefs will be presented in Chapter Four. This investigation will also consider the participants' beliefs about their teaching practices and what classroom observations of those teaching practices reveal. These beliefs and observations will be presented in Chapter Five. Finally, this investigation will consider how
the participants have integrated these beliefs from different sources into personal practical theories. These beliefs, their sources, and the way they are integrated into personal practical theories will be presented in Chapter Six.

There are several reasons why I will do this from the perspectives of the teachers who led me to ask these questions. One is to acknowledge them for having made me question my vision of my world by helping me look at their vision of their world. Another is because their world—the context of their teaching and learning situations—has helped me to clarify my questions. By recognizing how different theory is from practice I have learned to ask about technical and practical knowledge. By recognizing how much past teaching and learning experiences affect the way one teaches, I have learned to ask about tacit learning and knowledge. By recognizing how much individual understandings differ, I have learned to ask about beliefs. By recognizing how much non-pedagogical factors impact pedagogical decisions, I have learned to ask about Discourses. These are the areas that will be explored in the literature and with the teacher participants. Thus by seeing how these areas intersect, I have come to explore personal practical theories. Finally, by seeing how personal practical theories impact practices, I have come to wonder about articulation and teaching effectiveness.

Because this study investigates beliefs and experiences, it is interpretive so that self-reflection and self-description can capture those beliefs and experiences. It is mostly but not fully inductive. It is descriptive where it covers how participants perceive their thoughts and actions, and explanatory where it covers why participants had those thoughts and actions. The methods used to gather this information include interviews conducted by e-mail and in-person and classroom observations.

The written record of this investigation is organized into six chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, which provides an overview of the research project and its aims. Chapter Two is a review of the literature on the research subject. It covers literature on the nature of teaching and the role theory plays in language pedagogy. In this chapter three perspectives on the role of theory in second language pedagogy will be discussed: non-pedagogically-oriented or source theory, pedagogically-oriented local theory, and personal practical theory, where the roles of teacher beliefs, tacit knowledge, and reflection and expertise are discussed. Then the role of cultural contexts and Discourse is addressed. Chapter Three is a review of the literature on the
research methodology and procedures. It discusses the role of philosophy of science, the methods of this study, the philosophical commitments implied by those methods, and the criteria warranting the adequacy of this study. It includes a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter Four is the results of the data analysis concerning the espoused beliefs of the participants about their language and pedagogical learning experiences and the context in which they live and work. Chapter Five is the results of the data analysis concerning classroom practices. It considers the espoused beliefs of the participants about their practices and how they are (and are not) reflected in the data from classroom observations. Links are made to Chapter Four to show how espoused beliefs about their own experiences and their teaching context have influenced the participants' practices. Links are also made to the literature review to show how source and local theory contribute to the development of personal practical theory through their influence on beliefs and practices. Chapter Six presents summaries of the participants' personal practical theories and their sources. It will present the theory that accounts for how information from different sources is integrated into a personal practical theory and expressed (or not expressed) in classroom practices. It will consider how articulation and teaching effectiveness are linked. Finally, it will discuss the implications of the findings and conclude the study.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

A number of related themes informing current thinking in second language teacher development will be examined in this chapter. The fundamental question ‘What is teaching?’ will be addressed first. Teaching theory and practice will be examined next: first, by looking at what is meant by the word ‘theory’ and second, by looking at the role theory plays in language pedagogy through three perspectives on that role. First, the role of non-pedagogically-oriented (and often research-based) theories, or source theories, will be examined. Second, the role of pedagogically-oriented theory, that is method, will be examined, focusing on whether a method can determine classroom procedures. Third, the role of personal practical theories will be discussed by considering several perspectives on them and how they are constructed. All three discussions of the role of theory in teaching will lead to the conclusion that second language teaching practices are not completely determined by theory (regardless of what is meant by theory). Another theme is the role of the sociocultural contexts of EFL teacher programs and EFL teaching situations, with the focus on collisions between cultures. This leads into a discussion of Discourses (reviving the distinction Gee (1996) makes between discourse and Discourse). Finally, linguistic imperialism will be considered.

What Is Teaching?

A recent body of literature within applied linguistics (although to some extent derived from education) examines the question, ‘What is teaching?’ In general, these accounts describe how the concept of teaching has shifted from a product-oriented transmission view of teaching to a process-oriented interpretive or reflective view of teaching. The three accounts to be discussed are those of Wallace, Zahorik, and Freeman.

One categorization of teaching models is that provided by Wallace (1991), as cited by Crandall (2000). Wallace offers three models: (1) teaching as a craft or apprenticeship, learned through observing experienced practitioners; (2) teaching as an applied science, learned
through following research-based findings; and (3) teaching as reflection, learned through reflecting, evaluating, and adapting experiences.

Somewhat different models are described by Zahorik (1986) as cited in Freeman and Richards (1993). Zahorik’s categories are science/research, theory/philosophy, and art/craft. (It should be noted that ‘craft’ is used in quite different ways by different authors.) The science/research category is further divided into teaching which operationalizes learning, teaching which follows a tested model, and teaching which follows effective practices; these more or less fit Wallace’s applied science model in that research-based findings about teaching are transferred to teachers who can then follow ‘ready-made specific solutions’ for the classroom (Zahorik, 1986, p. 23, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993, p. 207). Freeman and Richards (1993) criticize the science/research category as perpetuating the process/product distinction and failing to consider individual differences between different classrooms and different teachers.

The second of Zahorik’s categories which Freeman and Richards consider is the theory/philosophy category, which is further divided into teaching based on theory and teaching based on values (1993). Theory and value-based teaching provide ‘ready-made general solutions’ for classroom practices (Zahorik, 1986, p. 23, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993, p. 207). According to this view classroom procedures are derived from, although perhaps not fully determined by, a theory. Again, the picture is of a product which can be transmitted to teachers. According to Freeman and Richards, these concepts of teaching share the view that education is a rational and interpersonal activity, which leads them to point out that they deny the role of the individual teacher’s views (1993).

Teaching as art/craft is Zahorik's third category, which as Freeman and Richards point out, differs from the theory/values category in that art/craft privileges the role of the individual teacher (1993). According to this view, teaching is creating an individual approach based on experience in order to provide what Zahorik terms ‘custom- and self-made solutions’ for the classroom (1986, p. 23, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993, p. 207). This is the category that Wallace calls reflective (Crandall, 2000). Here, teaching practices are determined by the teacher.
In a later work Freeman revises Zahorik’s three general categories by redescribing them as behavioural, cognitive, and interpretive (1994). Crandall broadly relates these to Wallace’s models, tying Wallace’s craft or apprenticeship model to Freeman’s behavioural model, Wallace’s applied science model to Freeman’s cognitive model; and Wallace’s reflective model to Freeman’s interpretive model (2000). The behavioural model assumes that teaching is ‘ways of doing things in the classroom’ (1994, p. 6). As with the earlier science/research category, teaching is viewed as a behavioural process transmitting a product, knowledge. The cognitive model is based on the theory/values category, revamped as the view that the fundamental assumption behind teaching is to ‘understand the rationale on which method is based’ (1994, p. 7). The rationale may have both cognitive and affective aspects, thus capturing both theory and values. Both the behavioural and cognitive models fail to take context—what to do ‘here and now’, as Freeman puts it (1994, p. 9)—into account. Furthermore, both assume that knowledge can be transmitted. These two criticisms lead Freeman to advocate the interpretive model of teaching. According to this model, as with the art/craft model, teaching is founded on the development of the individual teacher. Here, however, the social context within which the teacher participates is recognized as important. Thus this view is less narrowly egocentric than the earlier art/craft view. On this view teachers ‘articulate’ (Freeman, 1994, p. 12) their practices and ‘transfer’ (p. 14) new meanings onto their articulated practices.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) further argue that the process-product distinction of the behavioural model of teaching ‘ignores and devalues the individual experiences and perspectives of teachers’ (1998, p. 399). However, as this model gradually gave way to the cognitive model, the role of teachers’ thinking began to be explored, eventually leading to the interpretive model. This has led to the view that teachers’ thinking is shaped by their perceptions as students, their personal practical knowledge, their values and beliefs, and their work context. That is, ‘what teachers know about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come’ (p. 400) and is thus ‘highly interpretive, socially negotiated and continually restructured’ (p. 400).

Others have offered similar conceptions of teaching. Pennington (1999), for example, ranges teaching models on a continuum from ‘magic’ to ‘science’, with teaching as a profession
at the centre. Her point is that although the art and science models may be appealing, they are extreme, whereas her own view is ‘Teaching is what is rightly termed a profession in the sense of a reflective enterprise built at the interface between theory and practice, between collective and individual knowledge’ (199, p. 108). Crandall (2000) also describes a general shift from transmission, product-oriented conceptions of teaching to constructivist, process-oriented conceptions. She associates the craft or apprentice model of teaching with ‘doing’; the applied science or theory-to-practice model with ‘knowing’; and the reflective model with ‘knowing what to do’ (2000, p. 37).

More recently, Freeman has emphasized that teaching involves multiple ‘interpretive frames’ because ‘contexts are embedded within one another like so many boxes. Taken together, they create a complex interactive frame through which the teacher makes sense of her work’ (2002, p. 10). Each frame is different, contrasting more or less with other frames, so that ‘what had been called teacher ‘decision-making’ in the 1980s has become a complex, contingent, and amorphous set of relationships among meaning, context of mind, and public activity’ (2002, p.10). This, then, is the interpretive view of teaching.

On these views the interpretive model of teaching appears as a corrective to the models in which teachers are expected to listen to and follow ‘expert’ advice, transmitted to them from researchers, theorists, or their experienced mentors. However, critics of the behavioural and cognitive (or transmission) models appear to make several assumptions which deserve examination. First, there appears to be an assumption about the behavioural model in particular, but also the cognitive model, that teachers do as experts advise. One wonders whether this is necessarily undesirable. Perhaps experts do have useful advice to offer and perhaps teachers do benefit from it. This leads to the second assumption, that critics of transmission models appear to assume that teachers on these models are somewhat cognitively and ethically underdeveloped. They appear to not recognize or consider that the information research, theory, or even a mentor may offer do not necessarily fit the particularities of their own situation (of which, on critiques of these models, they appear ignorant). Yet as any teacher can point out, knowledge that little transfers intact comes rapidly in the actual attempt to transfer it; this hasn’t changed such that teachers have experienced, recognized, and addressed this only since the interpretive model. Thus it seems unlikely that transmission
models were ever intended to present teachers and teaching so narrowly, but rather focused (perhaps narrowly here) on sources of information as well as ways in which information can be taken up by teachers.

Taken together, the three models suggest a continuum from transmission to interpretation, yet neither extreme necessarily implies that teachers can not and do not perform the cognitive acts focused on at the opposite extreme. If it is allowed that the behavioural and cognitive models are not necessarily committed to teachers as mere mechanisms for transferring expert advice, then there is no reason why the interpretive view is privileged with respect to the fact that teachers can determine how to apply their knowledge to particular classroom situations. In other words, there is no reason to think that teachers do not make use of their own experiences and interpretive abilities on the behavioural and cognitive models.

Furthermore, the interpretive model has its own dangers. A narrowly individual approach may lose sight of the perspectives of other individuals involved in those experiences. Nor are all individuals equally capable of understanding and interpreting. Any activity can be performed mechanically, without thought or care, simply to get it done: poorly done interpretation also exists. Experiences in and of themselves may be limited; they may be misunderstood or narrowly understood; analyses of those experiences may be shallow, prejudiced, or logically flawed: knowledge based on them will be similarly ill-formed. In short, interpretation is no guarantee of good interpretation—or of good teaching.

To summarize, in these discussions of teaching models there is an underlying assumption that non-reflective views of teaching imply that teachers are passive and uncritical. That is, transmission views of teaching (whether of behaviour or knowledge) appear to be rejected because of assumptions about teachers which are attributed to the transmission models. However, it is not clear that an attribute of a transmission model should be understood to imply something about the teacher. The fact that a model assumes that something transfers to the teacher does not in and of itself necessarily imply uncritical passivity on the part of the teacher. Much of philosophy is taught on very traditional, transmission views of teaching, yet its effect—indeed, its purpose—is to stimulate highly critical reflection. Neither is it clear that the interpretive view of teaching necessarily leads to teachers who actively and effectively interpret, negotiate, and construct their teaching. Thus the process invoked in the interpretive model is
no more a guarantee of the product of effective teaching practices than is the transmission view. What it does do, however, is explicitly address the role that a teacher’s beliefs, experiences, and reflections can have in developing a professional body of knowledge. It moves from the fact that teachers can use an interpretive process to make classroom decisions, to examine and value that fact as the essential element in teaching. It might be said that the interpretive model of teaching simply emphasizes a process that exists in all teaching on all models. This means, as Freeman says, ‘The central challenge for teachers, like any of us, is to find meaning in our experience’ (2002, p. 11).

Perhaps teaching should not be regarded as a monolithic practice of which expertise is acquired in a single way and performed in a single way, but rather in different ways. For example, Eraut (1994) lists five types of professional processes: acquiring information, skilled behaviour, deliberative processes, giving information, and metaprocesses. All of these may have their role in teaching. To illustrate, classroom management may well be an area where the highly automatized on-line decision-making of skilled behaviour is necessary (learned through either rote training or years of experience); knowledge of content matter may well be an area where traditionally learned explicit knowledge is at least as fundamental as implicit knowledge; and meeting individual student needs an area where the deliberative processes of reflection and interpretation are required. Making considered and systematic changes to the body of knowledge and practices would be another area—indeed, a critically important one—where reflection and interpretation are prerequisites to change.

Each conception of teaching carries implications for learning to teach, that is, teacher development programs. Recently discussions about teacher development programs have come to focus on the ‘knowledge base’ of teachers. Here a shift that parallels the shift from the product to the process orientation of the concept of teaching is apparent. On the product view of teaching, teacher programs answered the questions, ‘What should teachers know?’ and ‘How should they teach it?’ On the process view of teaching, the questions are, ‘What do teachers know?’ and ‘How do they learn it?’ and it is the teachers themselves, rather than the program, that answers them. This shift from a prescriptive view of teaching to a descriptive view has also led to a shift in the roles played by theory and practice in second language pedagogy. As Freeman says, ‘The role of external input—of theory, prescriptions, and the experiences of
others—lies in how these can help the individual teacher to articulate her experience and thus make sense of her work’ (2002, p. 11). These issues will be discussed next.

Theory and Practice

The interface of theory and practice is the next topic, moving from categorizations of different conceptions of teaching to conceptual analyses of the role of theory and practice in second language teaching and teacher development. In this section, the uses of the word ‘theory’ in the literature will be examined first; next, several proposals about the relationship of theory and practice in language pedagogy will be examined.

What is Theory?

The word theory is used to refer to several different kinds of knowledge in the literature on language pedagogy. It is typically contrasted with practice. Much recent literature appears to argue against the distinction.

Clarke (1994) describes the distinction as a ‘problem’ with its roots in the tendency to dichotomize. The problem, according to Clarke, is that the distinction between theory and practice devalues the role and expertise of teachers as practitioners, while theoreticians are regarded as experts with all the concomitant benefits attending that status.

Ellis draws out another complexity when he distinguishes between different kinds of theories and practices, explaining, ‘It is not so much a question of the difference between theory and practice but rather of differences in the kinds of theory and practice’ (1997a, p. 237). For example, Ellis points out that second language acquisition (SLA) and language pedagogy both have theoretical and practical components. Thus it is not theory and practice that distinguish SLA and language pedagogy, but the purposes of the inquiries that distinguish them: SLA aims at what Ellis terms ‘technical knowledge’, while language pedagogy aims at ‘practical knowledge’ (1997a, p. 8). As does Clarke, Ellis also points out that technical knowledge appears to be valued more highly than practical knowledge.

Clearly the very words theory and practice carry a great deal of weight. Given the social values implied by the distinction, it is perhaps no surprise that practice appears to be a relatively unproblematic term. Being undervalued, practice remains relatively unanalyzed; it
appears to be used to mean the same thing throughout the literature: classroom procedures and activities. *Theory*, however, appears to refer to several different things, as Ellis points out. *Theory* is quite often taken to mean different theories in applied linguistics, in particular second language acquisition theories, but also theories in linguistics, psychology, and sociocultural theory, to name a few. Such theories may be termed *source theories*.

Although research and theory are of course different, this first use of *theory* is related to research-based inquiries. Both theoreticians and researchers tend to be academics or other ‘experts’ whose work needs interpretation to be useful to practitioners. For example, as Ellis puts it, SLA must be made ‘relevant’ to teachers; both SLA research and SLA theory development are mentioned in this context by Ellis (1997a, p. 33-34). Teachers also make this connection between theory and research; the Psycholinguistics and Psychology in the Classroom course which was described by several students as ‘theoretical’ was also described by one of them as ‘useful for research’.

A second, somewhat different use of *theory* relates it to language pedagogy rather than the more distant disciplines mentioned above. This use of *theory* may be described as *local theory*, since the theory is ‘located’ in the field itself. In her call for a local theory, Larsen-Freeman writes that the ‘true interdependence of theory, practice, and research in second language teaching will be achieved only when SLT [second language teaching] is illumined by a theory of its own making’ (1990, p.269). Within this second meaning of theory is an even narrower view of what constitutes a local theory, that is, a method (such as communicative language teaching or the Silent Way). Methods imply certain theoretical positions on teaching and learning; but because these are very specific positions, local theory in this sense is narrower than some of the broader understandings of it, such as that of Larsen-Freeman. On these narrower conceptions, specific practices are associated with a method. Teachers often use the word this way, as when McGrath cites one teacher describing a theoretical course as ‘useful for some scholars who study the methodology of teaching English’ and another describing the course as presenting ‘ideal method that is needed to be modified to adjust real situation’ (1999, p. 86). As with the first sense of *theory*, here, too, it is contrasted with classroom practices, although it also has clearly pedagogical aims that may not exist in the first sense of *theory*. 
Others focus on this narrower view of theory or method to highlight and critique its distinction from practice, leading to the denial of a disjunction between them. This is a third use of the word theory. There are a number of examples in second language pedagogy of this conception of theory that mention its genealogy. Ur describes 'professional knowing' as derived from 'the paradigm called variously 'theory of action' (Schon, 1983), 'practical theory' (Handel and Lauvas, 1987), or 'naturalistic generalization' (Stake, 1987)' (1992, p. 58). Van Lier writes of Bourdieu's 'theory of practice' (1996, p. 24). These sources emphasize the need for organized knowledge of practices to arise from those actually practicing, as opposed to those who are not actually practicing (or are from another discipline altogether). The focus on practitioners and practices suggests that this use of theory may be called personal practical theory.

Because of these many uses of the word theory it is therefore important to distinguish between source theories, such as SLA, education, linguistics, psychology, and so on; local theories or methods that recommend classroom practices in light of information from source theories; and personal practical theories that focus on the recognition and/or construction of personal theories by practitioners.

In the literature to be examined virtually all commentators assert the need for a theory of second language teaching. They differ, however, on the roles that source and local theory play in teaching. Some hold that source theories are only potentially useful to teaching. Other commentators focus their discussions on how local theories determine practices. Still others focus on personal practical theories, that is, how teachers themselves should recognize what beliefs their practices are based on in order to reflect upon both practices and beliefs, perhaps just in order to formulate them clearly, but also perhaps in order to change them in principled ways.

These different views will be dealt with in the following sections, with the role of source theories being considered first and the role of local theory or method in determining practices considered second. Personal practical theories will be considered third.

*Relevance of Source Theories to Practice*

The idea that theory is integral to teaching is perhaps the most traditional view. This is
implied, as some authors have pointed out, by the fact that nearly all teacher development programs include theoretical courses in such subjects as linguistics and SLA (Ur, 1992). Others address the issue more directly. For example, Richards and Rodgers deem as necessary ‘theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching’ (2001, p. 20). It is clear that for Richards and Rodgers, source theory is an integral part of teaching, since it is the ‘source’ of language teaching.

Others, however, are not so sanguine about the role of source theory in teaching. The McDonoughs suggest that sometimes teachers do not find research and research-based theory to be relevant to their classrooms, to the extent that ‘It is not even particularly unusual to find ‘theory’ rejected outright’ (1994, p. 103). They point out that this is due not just to teachers’ attitudes, but also to three other factors: teachers see themselves as uninvolved ‘recipients’ of research; research is concerned with products and not processes; and research fails to make explicit links to practices. They conclude that the result is ‘a mismatch between the demands and opportunities’ of teachers and researchers. (1994, p. 108).

Clarke (1994) also finds the theory/practice distinction to be dysfunctional for a variety of reasons. He asserts that those who develop theory usually aren’t teachers, and that as a consequence classroom teachers are considered to be less expert than those with little or no direct contact with teaching. Furthermore, theory ‘is usually imported from other disciplines’ (1994, p. 15). It tends to be general and ignorant of many of the non-cognitive factors which affect teaching and learning. Clarke’s solution ‘would be to turn the hierarchy on its head, putting teachers on the top’ (1994, p. 18). In that way teachers would be the ones who evaluated recommendations from researchers, upon whom would fall the onus of making their research relevant.

Johnson (1996) also focuses on the need for teachers to be the ones who make judgments about the relevance of theory to practice. She points out that the assumption that theoretical knowledge can automatically transfer to the classroom is misguided, and based on the behavioural model of teaching. She concludes that it is necessary to be realistic about what theory can and cannot do for teachers; theory is only important insofar as it impacts practical arguments (1996).
The relationship between theoretical knowledge based on source theory or research from outside language teaching and actual teacher experiences, beliefs, and practices is directly discussed by Ellis (1997a, 1997b). As mentioned above, Ellis (1997a) addresses the relationship between theory and practice by distinguishing between two types of knowledge: technical knowledge and practical knowledge. Technical knowledge is described as explicit and declarative or propositional—in other words, ‘knowing that’. Practical knowledge is described as implicit or tacit and intuitive—in other words, ‘knowing how’. According to Ellis, both types of knowledge, however, have theoretical and practical components. However, there appears to be a gap between the types of knowledge.

In discussing how to bridge the gap Ellis states that ‘the problem is one of transfer’ (1997a, p. 239). He suggests that mediation processes are one way of addressing the problem of transfer by making theory appear relevant, and considers how this can be done on the models of teaching described by Freeman (1994, 1996). Ellis suggests that on the behavioural model of teaching a source theory such as SLA can not be applied directly because it is not externally valid, that is, because of the complexity of classrooms, it cannot be automatically converted into particular practices by particular teachers.

The cognitive model is more promising according to Ellis. Referring to Schon’s description of professional tacit knowledge being reflected in actions and organized in theories, Ellis suggests that propositional knowledge from source theories (such as SLA) can play a role in making the tacit explicit (1997b). The tacit theories held by teachers as they teach can be reflected on while teaching, resulting in spontaneous experimentation, or after teaching, to make sense of what happens while teaching. It is during post-reflection in particular that propositional knowledge can play a role in articulating theories ‘in use’ so that they become ‘espoused’ theories (1997b, p.82). This can be done in two ways: by making existing theories explicit, and by constructing new principles which must then be tested in practice. However, as Ellis points out, source theories are merely one potential influence on teachers’ theorizing (1997b).

Ellis also explores the role of source theory on the interpretive model of teaching. According to this view, a source theory such as SLA can provide ‘provisional specifications’ for teachers to research in their classrooms (1997b, p. 83). These can come from SLA or from
teachers; in both cases they are not prescriptions to follow, but hypotheses to be professionally considered and tested.

In short, Ellis proposes that technical knowledge must be transformed in order to inform practical knowledge because they have different goals and epistemologies—‘different discourses’ (1997b, p. 88). This echoes Erut’s point that theory is ‘transformed’ into practice (1994, p. 157). As Ellis points out, implementing recommendations from research ‘is always a process of negotiation, involving a teacher’s overall educational ideology, the learners’ expectations and preferences and local constraints that determine what is feasible’ (1989, p. 68). It is clear, therefore, that on Ellis’s account the needs of teachers are the driving force behind the transformation of theory into practice because teachers, as professionals, are in the best position to know what their needs are.

Relationship between Theory and Practice in Local Theories or Methods

Local theories of second language teaching are, in part, responses to the perceived gap between source theories and second language teaching. For example, Larsen-Freeman points out that second language teaching relies on theories from several fields, including education, linguistics, and psychology. She admits these may be necessary, but concludes they are not sufficient for a theory of second language teaching. Her point is that second language teaching needs to develop its own theories because second language teaching has its own goals and agendas, much as Ellis (1997b) suggests.

What, then, does Larsen-Freeman (1990) envision as a theory of second language teaching (SLT)? ‘First of all, it would need to be grounded in classroom data….’ (1990, p. 267); that is, it would be inductive. ‘A second quality of a SLT theory would be that it would be dynamic….’ in order to allow for teacher growth through experience (p. 267). ‘Finally, it would be a theory which would motivate research not only of what a teacher does, but also what a teacher thinks’ (p. 267). In this way the theory would accord ‘a more central role in the processes of teaching and learning’ (p. 267) than has previous research. Such a theory would guide individual efforts towards a convergent and cumulative rather than fragmented goal.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) make similar points in advocating the development of a ‘knowledge-base’ to cover three areas: the teacher as learner, the context of teaching, and the
activity of teaching. This knowledge-base would be founded on research into actual teaching-learning practices, school and classroom contexts, and teacher experience and beliefs. They distinguish between ‘content’, or what is being taught and ‘subject matter’, or the professional, pedagogical perspective on teaching, writing that ‘content and subject matter are distinct yet convergent versions of the same phenomenon’ (p. 410). Although they acknowledge the importance of understanding learners and learning, as well as source theory, their focus is very much on teachers and teaching. The entire knowledge-base necessarily involves a practice-oriented perspective. The knowledge-base itself is described as falling between Larsen-Freeman’s call for a specific theory of second language teaching (1990) and Stern’s description of broad T-1 types of theory (1983) (the difference being that Stern mentions context while Larsen-Freeman does not).

Others have made similar points. For example, Richards (1990) writes that both micro approaches (analyzing observable classroom practices) and macro approaches (generalizations and inferences) can be used to develop a theory of second language teaching. He writes that such a theory would ‘guide and illuminate the meaning of observation and practical experience’ (1990, p. 15).

As mentioned above, local theories are also referred to as methods. However, it is probably not much clearer to talk of method than it is to talk of theory. Method has also been used variously: from narrow definitions of a set of techniques for the classroom, to broader definitions of a whole pedagogical framework. In an oft-cited work Richards and Rodgers directly address the issue of what method means by saying that they will use it ‘as an umbrella term for the specification and interrelation of theory and practice’ (Richards, 1985, p. 16, following Anthony, 1963.). They expand this definition by delineating three components to method: approach, design, and procedure. Crandall also describes this view of method as the heart of the methods course ‘which represents that theoretical rationale and practical implications of language teaching approaches, methods, procedures, and techniques’ (2000, p. 37). The relationships between the components are very close; each informs the other. In fact, Richards goes on to state that a method is ‘a language teaching philosophy that contains a standardized set of procedures or principles for teaching that are based upon a given set of theoretical premises about the nature of language and language learning’ (1985, p. 32). A
method does not allow for much teacher interpretation (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). This, then, is the traditional or conventional view of method. On this view method determines procedures; it is transmission oriented and is compatible with the behavioural and cognitive views of teaching; indeed, Richards and Rodgers say that methods are learned through training (2001).

However, this view of method is criticized by several authors. Pennycook (1989) presents three problems with the concept of method: ‘First, there is little agreement as to which methods existed when, and in what order; second, there is little agreement and conceptual coherence to the terms used; and third, there is little evidence that methods ever reflected classroom reality’ (1989, p. 602). Pennycook’s view is that methods are prescriptive, tied to perpetuating commercial and governmental interests and resulting in greater institutional control and the ‘de-skilling’ of teachers (1989, p. 610). He concludes that the complex contexts in which teaching occurs need to be recognized.

Crandall makes a similar point. She moves from critiquing the top-down approach of methods to recommending bottom-up reflections on teaching by teachers (2000).

Prabhu makes some of the same points by examining the statement, ‘There is no best method’. He proposes three possible understandings of the statement: ‘(a) that different methods are best for different teaching contexts; (b) that all methods are partially true or valid; and (c) that the notion of good and bad methods is itself misguided’ (1990, p. 161).

The first of these three understandings, according to Prabhu, means that it can be determined that some method is best for someone at some time. However, contextual factors implied by ‘someone at some time’ are not only complex, but so difficult to link to methodological decisions that it cannot be definitely asserted that some factor in a particular situation makes a difference to instruction.

Prabhu’s second point concerns the idea that every method has something of value to offer. Prabhu claims that a blending of different parts of different methods itself would constitute a theory or method rather than a blend, and thus be subject to the same criticism levelled at any other theory or method, namely, that it is no more fully true than they are. Prabhu also looks at eclecticism conducted without any sense that this or that part of a method is true. On this view, eclecticism is ‘an act of gambling or a hedging of bets’ that does not contribute to furthering
pedagogy, although it may lead to ‘truth by accident’ (1990, p. 168). Crandall also refers to the ‘eclectic approach’ as not being coherent, although she also points out that through analysis and evaluation teachers can ameliorate incoherence (2000, p. 38).

These criticisms lead Prabhu to suggest the need to rethink the word best. Prabhu’s point is basically that it is impossible to define best method because methods do not directly lead to instructional processes with predictable learning outcomes. Furthermore, if this were the case it would have an implausible consequence: ‘that teachers’ pedagogic perceptions are as easily replaceable as classroom procedures’ (1990, p. 171). That is, mechanical teaching would be effective teaching, when according to Prabhu, mechanical teaching without understanding is what we mean by bad teaching. Thus, Prabhu’s analysis of method leads to the conclusion that method alone does not adequately account for what is perhaps the most important component of teaching: the teacher and her own theorizing.

These discussions suggest that methods and local theories do not determine teachers’ practices; rather, teachers need to interpret them into practices. This is compatible with the interpretive model of teaching in particular. This leads to the next section on personal practical theories of teaching.

**Personal Practical Theory of Teaching**

A number of different terms have been used to describe what I am calling personal practical theory, including theory of action (Schon, 1983), personal practical knowledge (Clandinin 1985), theory of practice (Van Lier, 1996, after Bourdieu), and no doubt others. What distinguishes personal practical theories from the other kinds of theories discussed in this chapter is the focus on teachers’ beliefs and experiences as the determining factors in the construction of the theory.

This is not to say that a personal practical theory denies any place whatsoever for source or local theory. Rather, the teacher mediates the role played by source and local theory in her teaching practices, rather than source and local theory mediating her practices. Perhaps it is best described as a matter of epistemic attitude: the teacher whose practices are mediated by local theory believes her practices are justified by local theory, whereas the teacher who mediates source and local theory believes their influences on her practices are justified by her
own professional judgment about their efficacy. Several authors have dealt with the relationship between personal practical theory, other kinds of theory, and the role of the teacher in building theory. These will be looked at next.

**Teacher’s maxims**

Richards notes that in recent years ‘the need to listen to teachers’ voices in understanding classroom practices has been emphasized’ (1996, p. 281). His own version of how to capture what teachers have to say is that of ‘maxims which guide the teacher’s actions’ (p. 286). These maxims capture two types of knowledge: knowledge related to the subject being taught and how to present it, and knowledge related to the teacher’s personal beliefs about teaching. Richards suggests that the two cannot be divorced; choices in the classroom reflect personal beliefs about the nature of teaching. Furthermore, he suggests that teachers have a number of different maxims which may be variously used depending on circumstances. In this way maxims are subject to teacher interpretation. As Richards describes them,

> Teachers’ maxims thus can be viewed as outcomes of teachers’ evolving theories of teaching. They are personal working principles which reflect teachers’ individual philosophies of teaching, developed from their experience of teaching and learning, their teacher education experiences, and from their personal beliefs and value systems (1996, p. 293).

It can be seen, then, that there is a possible role for theory, as presented in teacher education programs and as understood by the teacher. There are also roles for teachers’ beliefs, experiences, and values. As working principles, maxims are intended to both arise from as well as guide practice. Thus Richards’ maxims are examples of how practices are key elements in his understanding of a personal practical theory of teaching.

**Sense of plausibility**

In discussing theory building by teachers, Prabhu coins the term ‘sense of plausibility’ (1994, p. 172). As with all the commentators in this section, Prabhu also focuses on the actual practices of teachers. He uses sense of plausibility to refer to ‘teachers’ subjective understanding of the teaching they do…some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning’ (1994, p. 172). He mentions several influences on a teacher’s sense of plausibility: a teacher’s experiences as a learner, as a teacher, in teacher training, of other
teachers, as a parent. A sense of plausibility needs to be active and engaged; it is involvement in the classroom, and it is involvement in the field, in that it must be open to change from different sources. A teacher’s experiences influence a sense of plausibility, but so do other teachers’ senses of plausibility as well as professional reading and writing, which keep it active.

Although Prabhu describes ‘specialists’ as ‘on the same footing as a teacher who operates with a sense of plausibility’, they are also described as having a ‘fuller and more communicable articulation of a particular sense of plausibility’ (1990, p. 174). Prabhu then suggests that perhaps it is easier for a specialist to maintain an active sense of plausibility because of their professional commitments. Thus Prabhu seems to be claiming that it isn’t methods generated by specialists which are important, but individual senses of plausibility. This appears to elevate the status of teachers as determiners of plausibility; however, he then goes on to say that specialists are more likely to have better senses of plausibility than teachers. While this is different than saying good teaching means following a specialist’s method, it still privileges the specialist. In the same vein, Prabhu makes much of the fact that methods are not objectively right or wrong, but rather have ‘more or less pedagogic power to influence teachers’ subjective understanding of teaching’ (1990, p. 175). But it still sounds like specialists influencing teachers, rather than teachers influencing specialists (or themselves), much less teachers doing what specialists do, despite the concluding proposal to ‘search for ways in which teachers’ and specialists’ pedagogic perceptions can most widely interact with one another’ (1990, p. 176).

While Prabhu does not spell it out, it is clear that an active sense of plausibility is centred on, or at least takes into account, the bottom-up aspect of teaching in a particular context, rather than being a top-down approach where theory or methods determine classroom practices. It is also clear, however, that source and local theories from ‘specialists’ have roles to play in the development of each teacher’s individual ‘sense of plausibility’.

Postmethod pedagogy

Kumaravadivelu also discusses the shift from teachers who follow methods to teachers who construct their own individual views of language teaching (1994, 2001). He attributes this shift to ‘an awareness that as long as we are caught up in the web of method, we will continue
to get entangled in an unending search for an available solution’ (1994, p. 28). Kumaravadivelu builds on Prabhu’s analysis of the end of method and makes his own contribution, describing the current state of language teaching as the ‘postmethod condition’ (1994, p. 28). The traditional notion of method empowered theorizers; the postmethod condition ‘empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice’ and to ‘generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative practices’ (1994, p. 29).

Kumaravadivelu makes three points about the postmethod condition: that an alternative to method-based teaching should be developed; that teacher autonomy should be promoted; and that ‘principled pragmatism’ should guide classroom practices (1994, p. 30). Kumaravadivelu calls his own suggestion for the alternative to method a ‘strategic framework for L2 teaching’ (1994, p. 31). It is based on the idea that teaching involves macrostrategies and microstrategies. (See above Richards, 1990, for a similar point.) Macrostrategies ‘are derived from theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical knowledge related to L2 learning/teaching’ (1994, p. 32). Microstrategies are the foundation on which teachers develop ‘their own situation-specific, needs-based microstrategies’ of actual teaching (1994, p. 32). Both macrostrategies (and presumably by the principle of transitivity the microstrategies which arise from them) are theory-neutral and method-neutral, meaning they are not fully determined by any one theory or method, but potentially compatible with a number of theories and methods. Kumaravadivelu details ten macrostrategies, which he describes as ‘not a closed set of formulae but rather an open-ended set of options’ (1994, p. 43). It is intended to provide guidance while allowing teachers to be autonomous. These are fleshed-out in a later work (2001).

It is clear that Kumaravadivelu sees teachers as making use of the macrostrategies based on their own needs (and those of their students, of course), as Ellis also suggests (1997a, 1997b). In a sense, what Kumaravadivelu has done is to ‘bridge the gap’ by suggesting a number of research- and theory-based ideas for teachers to consider. So here, too, teachers make use of source theories as well as local theories of second language pedagogy in order to develop their own teaching practices. However, it could be suggested that research- and theory-based macrostrategies are themselves the basis of a theory. Again, as with Richards and Prabhu, Kumaravadivelu avoids this by constant reference to how teachers must individually determine their practices, using macrostrategies as a guideline rather than a
rulebook, that is, teachers must consider the strategies in light of their actual situation rather than simply following the strategies. It is clear that the intention of these three authors is to empower teachers to make their own choices at both the practical and theoretical levels without making allegiance to a single method be the only path to consistency or with making reliance on a variety of methods only be the road to eclectic ruin.

Making principled choices is a constructivist approach in which teachers must investigate and examine teaching methods, according to Crandall, rather than a prescriptivist approach in which methods are followed 'as recipes or cookbooks' (2000, p. 38). On a constructivist approach, the teacher is guided by a 'postmethod pedagogy' (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 552).

Postmethod pedagogy has three parameters, alliteratively called 'particularity, practicality, and possibility' (2001, p. 538). Particularity captures the relevance of learner goals, institutional context, and sociocultural situation to second language teaching. Sensitivity to the local situation is not something that can be merely 'searched and rescued' as Kumaravadivelu puts it (2001, p. 539); it must be lived by practicing teachers who observe, evaluate, and experiment with teaching. This ‘continual cycle of observation, reflection and action is a prerequisite for the development of context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge’ (2001, p.539). Thus particularity leads to practicality.

The parameter of practicality is directly related to overcoming the theory/practice dichotomy by developing in teachers the tools needed to generate a practical theory marked by an ongoing cycle of reflection and action. It will take into account teachers’ insights and intuitions. This is explained not merely as a means of improving learning, but also a means of ‘understanding and transforming possibilities’ (2001, p. 542). In this way practicality is linked to possibility.

Possibility is linked to making the most of what is available. It is therefore linked to particularity. It is also reminiscent of van Lier’s affordances, the opportunities available to learners and teachers (2002).

Richards’ ‘teachers’ maxims’, Prabhu's ‘sense of plausibility’, Kumaravadivelu ‘post-method pedagogy’ are examples of personal practical theories with strong links to the interpretive view of teaching. They reject source theory and method or local theory as the sole
determining basis for second language teaching, while leaving room for them to influence a teacher's own personal practical theory.

It is tempting to equate the difference between source and local theories on the one hand and personal practical theories on the other hand with the difference between the transmission view of teaching on the one hand and the interpretive view of teaching on the other hand: the teacher who follows local theory operates from a transmission view, while the teacher who follows personal practical theory operates from an interpretive view. But it is not clear that transmission and interpretation are dichotomies, that is, that they cannot coexist. Nor is it clear that either of them owns the baggage assigned to them. As mentioned earlier, the transmission view is associated with passive acceptance and the interpretive view with critical understanding; neither is necessarily so.

Thus it is not so easy to dichotomize the paths by which one acquires the various knowledge and skills necessary to such a complex task as teaching. Personal practical theories suggest that it is the teacher herself who forges the links that connect her knowledge and skills, a process that occurs through the theorizing she does.

**Professional Knowledge**

This section will look at the acquisition or building of personal practical theory in more detail, beginning with an overview of Eraut on professional knowledge. It will then continue by focusing on the role of the teacher beliefs in personal practical theory through several themes: teacher beliefs and tacit knowledge; the problem with tacit knowledge; making the tacit explicit; reflection and expertise; and autonomy and affordances.

The primacy of practices is the foundation of personal practical theory. As mentioned above, this does not deny the role of either source or local theory. It is a fact that most teachers are presented with such theories, usually in their teacher development programs, but possibly through their own investigations or collegial discussions. The point, however, is that such theories cannot merely be taken off the shelf or retrieved from the attic, to borrow two of Eraut’s images (1994). This is what Freeman (1994, 1996) and Ellis (1997a, 1997b) refer to as the problem of transfer, discussed earlier. It concerns how professionals acquire professional knowledge and practices.
Eraut, following Broudy et al (1964), distinguishes between four modes of knowledge: replication, application, interpretation, and association. Earlier in this chapter the transmission view of teaching was seen to be rejected by several writers because it is imputed to rely on replication (transferability to a similar situation) or application (transferability to a somewhat different situation) of procedures or rules. As Eraut points out, ‘it is argued that this is not professional work’ (p. 48). The interpretive view of teaching was seen to be upheld because it relies on interpretation, which is seen as a more professional approach because it involves ‘understanding’ and ‘ways of seeing’ that form the justificatory basis for practices (1994, p. 49).

Eraut points out, however, that this view presents two problems: first, much professional knowledge does appear to get passed down wholesale, as if replication and application were the relevant mode of knowledge; and second, professional judgment is not the same as ‘understanding’, but rather is based on accumulated experience and is exercised without time for deliberative reflection: it ‘is not used in a replicative or applicative mode; nor is it fully interpreted’ (1994, p. 49). Thus, although practice is the foundation of a practical theory of teaching, it is not merely routine practice. Nor is it fully interpreted, that is, deliberate actions carefully taken after conscious reflection. Eraut, and a number of others, therefore turn to the importance of tacit or implicit knowledge and the need to make it explicit in their discussions of professional processes.

The fourth type of knowledge use that Eraut mentions is association, which is essentially the use of metaphorical images. He cites Broudy as calling it a ‘semi-conscious, intuitive mode of knowledge use’ (1994, p. 49) which can both inform practices as well as ‘carry’ theories. Eraut says that it has not been well-investigated in the field of education, although within the field of language teaching and learning there have been a few studies (see Ellis, 2001, and Oxford, 2001). As an intuitive mode of knowledge use, however, it would appear to be tacit, and thus the implications of metaphors would also need to be made explicit.

Tacit or implicit knowledge is discussed by a number of authors. It is not the explicitly held propositional knowledge associated with books and the public theory there enshrined, but rather the intuitively held, unexamined beliefs that form the basis for other beliefs as well as actions. It will be discussed next.
Teacher Beliefs and Tacit Knowledge

Teacher beliefs have been explored by a number of authors in both the education and second language literature. Such explorations have led to a confusing variety of poorly conceptualized terms, as Pajares points out (1992). In this section I will follow the usages employed by the individual authors under consideration, but use ‘beliefs’ myself, following Pajares. Pajares cites a number of educational sources suggesting that beliefs have several components, including cognitive, affective, and evaluative components, the latter two in particular distinguishing beliefs from knowledge, which she describes as based on objective fact. Philosophical sources also make a more or less similar distinction, usually focusing on the justificatory grounds of some kind of relationship between knowledge and facts or reality as what distinguishes knowledge from (mere) belief, e.g., knowledge as justified true belief. Lacking this justificatory ground, beliefs may be persistent in the face of opposing evidence, inconsistent with other beliefs and knowledge, and irrelevant to reality, thus implying that ‘belief systems are by their very nature disputable, more inflexible, and less dynamic than knowledge systems’ (Nespor, 1987, cited in Pajares, 1992, p. 311). Some of these points concerning belief, in particular its persistence, will be touched on below.

Perhaps the most thorough exploration of teacher beliefs in the second language learning literature is that of Woods (1996), who looked at the intrapersonal beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge (BAK) of eight experienced teachers working in Canada, half of whom had originally come from other countries. According to Woods, teachers have recourse to various procedures and strategies which enable them to make the decisions that structure courses (1996). These procedures and strategies are affected by teachers’ beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge. While this is true for all teachers, it is especially complex for language teachers because everyone has internalized ideas about language from their lifelong contact with it.

What, then, is the role of beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge (BAK) in teaching? Woods answers this by pointing to the interpretive processes of teachers. He lists a number of areas that teachers interpret through their beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge: classroom events, curriculum, textbook approaches, theoretical and research literature, pedagogical concepts, and approaches to planning. His own research indicated its pervasiveness not only throughout his data, ‘but also in the effect it has on teachers’ organizations of thoughts,
decisions, and aspects of the course. BAK was part of the perceiving and thinking about the events, and part of the structuring and organizing of the decisions’ (1996, p. 247).

For Woods this shows how teaching is ‘beyond’ the transmission and interpretation dichotomy. Teaching is individual:

…each teacher has an individual system of interwoven beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, a system which has evolved in an individual and organic fashion when aspects of that teacher's BAK have interacted with experience, especially experiences that resulted in a conflict with the BAK’s current state (1996, p. 248).

Thus on this view the teacher is the key element in teaching because of the role their cognitions play in forming their practices. The theoretical aspects of teaching—which Woods, like van Lier, refers to as curriculum—is a ‘dynamic’ process created by the teacher (1996, p. 269). It reflects the teacher’s evolving beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge. The focus here, then, is on the role that language teachers play in their own development (Crandall, 2000, p. 36). It is a lifelong process that involves active engagement through reflection on practices.

Another author who emphasizes the role of the teacher’s knowledge in determining teaching is Richards (1996). Richards distinguishes between two types of knowledge. However, he groups what Woods calls subject matter knowledge and instructional knowledge together in order to distinguish them from a ‘personal and subjective philosophy of teaching’ (1996, p. 4). It is this personal perspective that is the basis for the practical actions teachers take in the classroom. The personal perspective, which appears not unlike the notions of folk pedagogy and intuitive conceptions to be addressed below, takes the form of teaching maxims (mentioned above). They are the principles which guide, monitor, and change classroom actions. They are also, however, not merely a set of procedures or principles to follow, since they involve a teacher’s personal agenda as well as a curricular agenda: they express ‘engagement in teaching’ (1996, p. 17).

Thus language teachers have both ‘folk assumptions’ about language as well as beliefs based on theory and research from their professional development (Woods, 1996, p. 186). These beliefs involve different aspects of language that affect teaching. Beliefs about language itself affect what material gets taught and beliefs about learning affect the way language is taught. There are, of course, also beliefs about teaching, revolving around who knows what. Thus the roles of teachers and students, motivation, discipline, and responsibility as well as how
to teach are a part of a teacher’s beliefs about teaching. In emphasizing the role of the teacher rather than the curriculum, Woods rejects the conventional view, as represented by Richards and Rodgers (1986) whom he cites, as well as that of most teaching programs (1996).

This view of the importance of teachers’ beliefs is also found in the general education literature. Lortie’s discussion of the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (1975) describes the beliefs teachers acquire about teaching through their years as students. As he puts it, ‘being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching’ (1975, p. 61). Although such knowledge is limited because of its narrow perspective (in particular because students have little to no conception of the problems teachers face and the technical knowledge that teachers may have), it is also powerful, if only because it means that ‘the mind of the education student is not a blank awaiting inscription’ (1975, p. 66). On Lortie’s view, the beliefs a student develops about teaching form a continuous whole with the beliefs she later develops as a teacher. These beliefs based on personal experience are intuitive, and will lack a critical element unless specifically engaged.

More recently, Strauss (2001) discusses ‘folk pedagogy’, the implicitly held beliefs that teachers have about teaching and learning. Rather than calling them theories or knowledge (although acknowledging that both terms are widely used by others), Strauss refers to ‘mental models’, which are ‘powerful organizers of people’s understandings of aspects of their world’ (p. 222). Mental models guide learning objectives, understandings of how students learn assumptions about how specific teaching behaviours will lead to learning, and meta-assumptions about teaching and learning. Strauss believes them to be much more powerful than subject matter knowledge in determining how teaching is organized and performed.

Torff and Sternberg (2001) discuss the intuitive conceptions of teachers, which they define as ‘knowledge or knowledge structures that need not be available to conscious reflection but act to facilitate or constrain task performance’ (p. 7). They differentiate two types of intuitive conceptions: primary ones which are innately specified knowledge structures common to all, and secondary intuitive conceptions which are learned knowledge structures specific to a sociocultural milieu. Intuitive conceptions include beliefs, expectations, and knowledge from teachers’ own experiences that ‘influence what they come to understand, value and use from courses in teacher education’ (p. 21). These intuitive conceptions, which are implicitly learned, are tacit knowledge. Although teachers also have explicit knowledge of their discipline, Torff and
Sternberg believe that the implicitly held intuitive conceptions of teachers are stronger than explicit knowledge in determining what goes on in the classroom.

Eraut also focuses on the importance of tacit knowledge for teaching. As he points out, classroom decision-making occurs too quickly for deliberative processing of propositional knowledge. Nor is it the source of propositional knowledge, although it forms the knowledge base for professional judgments. Instead, it relies on instant or rapid interpretation:

...when the evidence appears during real-time incidents in a busy or crowded environment such as...a classroom, there may be little time for deliberation. A live encounter passes in a flash. What is remembered will depend on the ability of the perceiver to notice and select the right information rapidly at the time of the encounter. There is no opportunity to start learning to interpret such incidents in ‘slow motion’ (Eraut, 1994, p. 109).

Thus ‘knowledge of how to teach becomes tacit knowledge, something which is not easily explained to others or even oneself’ (1992, p. 111). Whether called assumptions, intuitive conceptions, or tacit knowledge, the implicitly held beliefs of teachers hold a central role in a personal practical theory of teaching. However, the notion of tacit knowledge is not unproblematic. This will be discussed next.

*The Problem with Tacit Knowledge*

Eraut uses the phrase ‘skilled behaviour’ to describe what is ultimately learned on the basis of the tacit knowledge gathered through experience. He describes it as ‘a complex series of actions which has become so routinized through practice and experience that it is performed almost automatically’ (1994, p. 111). However, such skilled behaviour is not necessarily an unmitigated good. The combination of tacit knowledge and automatized routines means that such professional judgments are ‘difficult to monitor and to keep under critical control’ (Eraut, 1994, p. 112). In fact, they can become dysfunctional over time because theory-less practices may be based on rapidly acquired impressions without any intent of learning from those impressions. Furthermore, they can become dysfunctional if they are practiced without attention to the exigencies of the situation, e.g., student feedback. Such impressionistically formed practices may turn out to be effective. However, without making use of higher-level cognitions, it would be difficult to determine whether (and why) they are effective. Thus they would not be professional judgments.
Others also discuss this. Prabhu (1990), for example, mentions the problem of mechanical teaching. Van Lier writes about the danger of ‘blind opportunism or routinization of theory-less practice’ (1996, p. 25), that is, cases where the teacher is unaware of what is implied by her practices. Such a lack of awareness is dangerous, according to van Lier, for it implies a lack of control and ultimately a lack of autonomy.

One way the lack of awareness arises is through the difference between espoused theory and theory in use, as Eraut describes it (1994, p. 97). That is, the stated reasons that a teacher uses to justify her classroom practices may not have much to do with the actual tacit reasons revealed through her behaviour. Ur (1992) also refers to this, acknowledging that tacit knowledge may not be readily articulated, and may even contradict stated beliefs. Crandall (2002) implies this by suggesting that teachers should make their beliefs become ‘consistent with their emerging understandings of the language learning and teaching processes’ (2000, p. 36). Several studies have offered evidence of this (Almarza, 1996; Kennedy, 1996: Lamb, 1994; Pennington and Richards, 1997). A slightly different perspective that focuses more on variety of interpretation as opposed to inconsistency between belief and practice is offered by another study (Breen et al, 2001), which suggests that although an individual teacher associates specific practices with specific principles, different teachers may associate different practices with those principles. While differences between teachers’ beliefs and even within an individual teacher’s beliefs may be taken as evidence of the complexity and even dynamic developmental nature of teacher beliefs—‘the idiosyncratic nature of language teachers’ cognitions and practices’ as Borg (2003, p. 98) puts it in his summary of research in this area—persistent inconsistency may also reflect weak understanding or poor interpretation.

Another potential problem is the persistence of tacit knowledge. As mentioned earlier, Torff and Sternberg (2001) claim that tacit knowledge is a powerful influence on teachers. Crandall (2000) and Lortie (1975) also describe the persistence of tacit ‘preconceptions’ based on previous experiences. Similarly, Eraut (1994) writes of how teachers are likely to follow the practices by which they were taught unless they make an effort to deliberate on their professional processes. Again, research has offered evidence that this is indeed the case (Almarza, 1996; Borg, 1998; Golombek, 1998; Numrich, 1996; Pennington, 1996; Pennington
and Richards, 1998). Borg (2003) summarizes some of the recent research in this area by writing,

The general picture to emerge here then is that teachers’ prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives (p. 88).

While persistence may not be a problem with effective practices, perpetuating ineffective practices is a problem.

How does a practical theory of teaching counter these threats to its practice-based foundation? By focusing on the word theory as well as practice. This is perhaps better captured by theorizing, that is, the process of theory-building by teachers. But in order for this to happen, the tacit and automatic need become available for conscious attention. Thus the next section will deal with the centrality of making the tacit explicit in developing personal practical theories of teaching.

*Making the Tacit Explicit*

How can the tacit become explicit? Several authors offer explanations of this process. Ur (1992) describes a process by which the implicit or tacit can become explicit, citing Kolb (1984): first, there is concrete experience; second, there is reflective observation of that experience; third, there is abstract conceptualization of the reflection; and fourth, there is active experimentation to test the conceptualization. It is at the level of abstract conceptualization that the tacit becomes explicit. Richards (1996) suggests that teaching programs help teachers articulate their maxims and then use them to reflect on their teaching. He also suggests that they could be challenged in order to facilitate teacher change, a notion that brings to mind the problematizing nature of awareness, to be discussed below. Crandall also specifically mentions that implicit teacher beliefs ‘need to be made explicit if teachers are to consider new techniques or changes in practices’ (2000, p. 39). Freeman writes that teacher education should address two functions: ‘the skills of reflectivity’ and ‘the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience’ (2002, p. 11). Since the problem with the tacit remaining tacit is that it is not available for conscious consideration and therefore cannot be
controlled, the problem is in essence one of attention. Thus the solution will involve being able to pay attention in order to become aware of tacit beliefs.

According to Schmidt, conscious processes have several different senses: intention, attention, awareness, and control (1994). Van Lier (who adds another sense, the interpersonal) summarizes the notion of consciousness as ‘the organizing, controlling, and evaluating of experience’ (1996, p.73). Schmidt’s different senses of consciousness form a hierarchy that can be exploited in describing how to make tacit beliefs and automatic procedures explicitly available to consciousness and control.

First, there must be an intention to engage in the process of making the tacit explicit. Tacit knowledge does not become explicit by itself.

Second, one needs to notice and attend. Given the rapid changes that characterize the classroom, however, noticing what one is doing much less what one is thinking is highly unlikely to occur in any thorough or systematic way. Others, however, can assist, by observing and providing feedback. This can occur both during practice and outside of practice. Some feedback occurs on-line as practices succeed or fail (i.e., from students); other feedback can also occur more formally from others (i.e., outside observers). Thus observation and feedback from others can make noticing more thorough and systematic. This, therefore, is where the interpersonal (Van Lier, 1996) plays a role in developing consciousness. For Eraut (1994), feedback is essential not only to change, but to the very acquisition of practical skills: ‘practical skills can only be acquired through practice with feedback’ (1994, p. 81). Eraut also recognizes another means of providing feedback. Metacognitive processes can be used to reflect and evaluate, or as Eraut puts it, to provide oneself with feedback.

Through attention one becomes aware, the third level. Several suggestions emerge of what one can pay attention to: what one does; what one thinks and believes; what others observe of one’s behaviours; what others say about one’s thoughts and beliefs. Furthermore, one can pay attention to the similarities and differences among these, and it is here that I would like to suggest that awareness, as distinct from noticing, may emerge, by virtue of having an analytical element that is not a part of noticing. Thus the notion of ‘noticing the gap’ might be borrowed from second language acquisition theory, and suggests that an essential step in making the tacit explicit is to become aware of the gap between practices and beliefs, whether
one's own or another's version of them. I would offer, therefore, that noticing the gap is actually a form of awareness, at a somewhat higher level of cognitive processing than mere noticing. Central to this notion is the fact that some sort of comparison occurs. Noticing different possible perspectives need not involve evaluating them (Fanselow, 1988). On this view the gap noticed would be simply the fact that alternatives exist. Others, however, have pointed to this sort of comparison in terms of problems, which does include an evaluative component.

Woods (1996), for example, talks about teacher change in terms of the experiences and reflections of teachers on problems. According to Woods, as the beliefs, knowledge, assumptions and experiences of teachers evolve, they experience conflict, or ‘hotspots’ (1996, p. 203). In order to resolve the conflict, teachers change. Eraut (1994) also points out that, on Schon’s view in particular, it is a problem disrupting routine which alerts the professional and creates the space in which reflection, and possibly change, occurs.

This does present a problem, however. On this view it would appear that awareness, as the critical step in making the tacit explicit, could only occur where there is an inconsistency between theories and practices, or between one’s own and others’ perceptions of them. While this is not strictly speaking counterintuitive, it is a rather unhappy outcome. One can imagine someone being both a consistent teacher and an aware teacher and yet still finding room for further improvement. Hence Fanselow’s suggestion that recognizing different perspectives and alternative courses of action need not—indeed, should not—be judgmental is a welcome one (1988). Others have looked at this from different perspectives.

Freeman and Richards (1993) mention ‘tensions’ between a teacher’s intentions and actions which prevent her from fully realizing intentions in the classroom. However, they see these not so much as problems but as ‘divergences’ between different elements in a teacher’s understanding of the situation, the subject matter, and the students. Not every demand made by these different elements can be addressed at the same time. Golombek (1998) also discusses this in terms of a teacher seeking ‘balance’ between beliefs based on her own experiences and beliefs about student and programme expectations. Both Freeman and Richards and Golombek underline the importance of becoming aware of these tensions by attempting to articulate them.
Tsui (2003) develops another approach to the comparative aspect of awareness in her
discussion of expertise in teaching. According to Tsui, a crucial element in expertise is
‘problematizing the ‘unproblematic’” (2003, p. 267). Tsui describes in detail how an expert
teacher critically looked at her own well-established and successful teaching practices in ways
that led to exploring and experimenting with alternatives. Writing of expert teachers, she
suggests ‘It is the problematizing of what appears to be unproblematic, and the effort and
energy put into tackling the problem at a higher level of complexity and sophistication, that
distinguish them from nonexpert teachers’ (2003, p.272). ‘Tackling the problem’, however, is
the fourth stage.

Having become aware of the tacit, the fourth stage is to control it. Van Lier (1996)
addresses this within the context of how declarative knowledge can ‘interfere’ with procedural
knowledge. While he presents this in the context of second language acquisition as a negative
feature of declarative knowledge (to be addressed below), it can also operate in a positive
fashion. Declarative knowledge can be a source of control and change, for van Lier describes
declarative knowledge as necessary to the organization of procedural knowledge. For example,
consciously analyzing what one has been unconsciously doing can lead to recognizing the
variables that affect one’s performance, establishing control of them (that is, interfering with
them), and analyzing the effects of that intervention with an eye towards improvement.

Outside information—from source theories and local theories—can be helpful with this
kind of analysis. Freeman suggests that theory can help teachers to articulate and make sense
of their experiences (2002, p.11). For example, by trying to understand what actually occurs in
classroom interactions—an area that Ellis describes as ‘not a language with which teachers are
generally familiar’ (1999, p. 210)—a teacher can bring careful, considered reflection to bear on
what is happening, why, and how it affects learning in her particular classroom.

Thus two roles for propositional or declarative knowledge as a part of teacher theory
building (as well as teacher change and growth) are evident. First, declarative knowledge of
one’s own beliefs and practices is the outcome of the process of making tacit knowledge
explicit. In this way personal practical theory arises inductively from practices: theoretical
generalizations begin with the intention of noticing practices in order that beliefs about them can
be articulated. This can also lead to becoming aware of their role in light of other practices and
beliefs, so that connections are recognized, thereby generating a system of beliefs that can account for practices, that is, a theory. However, in making connections between beliefs and practices, shortcomings in practices or gaps between practices and beliefs may be noticed. This is the second role.

The second role is that propositional or declarative knowledge from source and local theory and research can provide ways of organizing and controlling practices. As in the example about classroom interactions, a teacher could learn from SLA source theory that different interaction patterns have different effects on opportunities for student speaking. She might find a way to notice and become aware of what the interaction patterns in her own classroom were, e.g., by recording a lesson. This could lead her to local theory that offers suggestions for classroom practices with which she could then experiment with interaction patterns by organizing opportunities for different kinds of interactions among students to occur and controlling her own role in interactions with students.

Both of these roles for declarative knowledge occur during the process of reflection, either in the planning stages before an action or in reviewing after an action. Ellis (1999) describes this as the 'external' view of teaching, where curricular goals, materials, activities, and assessment are considered. This is the view that is considered in teacher development programs, collegial discussions, and classroom planning. As has been shown, however, taking this outside perspective before or after the teaching event, when there is room for measured consideration, is also an opportunity for the external view to have an impact on the internal events of the classroom.

The internal view of teaching is ‘a series of interactional events’ (Ellis, 1999, p. 209) that occur in the classroom. Here, inside the classroom, spontaneity and improvisation rule, as several studies on how and why teachers depart from lesson plans suggest (Bailey, 1996; Nunan, 1992; Richards, 1998; Woods, 1996). The classroom is where these spontaneous and improvised practices must be noticed if they are to be articulated and controlled. Thus in this discussion it appears that the two views of the classroom interact, with the classroom offering material for reflection outside of the classroom leading to new actions inside the classroom which then need to be reflected on, in what becomes a cyclical process. But what is the effect
of importing the deliberate reflections of the external view of teaching into the spontaneous internal view?

Unfortunately, one possible effect of importing deliberate reflections into the classroom can be to stultify practices and interactions which had once been spontaneous. Therefore, if reflection leads to change in practices, then the potentially negative aspect of unproceduralized actions, briefly alluded to above, must be considered. Although unproceduralized practices are often associated with novice teachers, even experienced teachers trying new activities or teaching in new situations may find themselves engaging in unproceduralized practices.

Van Lier writes that declarative and procedural knowledge need to be ‘synchronized’ in order for them to work together effectively (1996, p. 77). That is, without synchronization, declarative knowledge may interfere with procedural knowledge, as sometimes happens when one becomes so self-conscious during a procedure that one fails to execute it properly. Leinhardt also suggests that ‘situated knowledge can be seen as a form of expertise in which declarative knowledge is highly proceduralized and automatic’ (1998, p. 146, cited in Woods, 1996, p. 192). Johnson (1996) also discusses the notion of situated knowledge in similar terms. Eraut (1994) makes a similar point. He describes the skilled behaviour of the professional as a highly interactive process in which decisions are made rapidly through reliance on tacit knowledge. The practitioner’s behaviour is routinized or proceduralized, and is not self-conscious, but focused instead on the exigencies of the particular situation. This is where Eraut (1994) points to the ideal: the professional who brings both highly proceduralized practices as well as explicit knowledge of their (formerly) tacit origins to the classroom, enabling her to make rapid decisions that can be monitored by reflection. This kind of rapid reflection (Schon’s ‘reflection-in-action’, 1987) would have to be highly proceduralized to be effective, and is what distinguishes the professional from the novice.

Reflection and Expertise

Two types of reflection have been alluded to: deliberate or considered reflection outside the classroom and rapid reflection or reflection-in-action inside the classroom. The body of literature on reflection in teaching is vast, and much of it refers to Schon and Eraut as has been done here. Dewey should also be mentioned; as Calderhead and Gates point out,
His distinction between action based on reflection and action that is impulsive or blind, and his emphasis on the need to develop certain attitudes of open-mindedness and skills of thinking and reasoning in order to reflect have shaped the way that many researchers and teacher educators have thought about reflective teaching (1993, p.1).

Certainly this distinction captures why reflection is necessary, and informs the previous discussion of making the tacit explicit. However, Calderhead and Gates also point out that reflection in its many guises is often merely presumed to be positive. They offer evidence, however, of the emergence of several common themes in a growing body of literature. These themes are that reflection is a complex process involving values, attitudes, and beliefs; it is developmental and thus needs to be learned and practiced; it needs time and focus—otherwise, it can become overly process-oriented; and it can be enhanced with a facilitator who develops it and encourages autonomy. Thus reflection suggests ‘a view of professional growth which recognizes teaching as a complex activity that is highly demanding both cognitively and affectively and is a process of continuous development’ (1993, p.9).

Freeman (2002) also addresses the role of reflection, emphasizing that reflection alone is not enough. He makes three points: teachers need to understand their experience, there need to be relationships between new and experienced teachers, and teaching contexts need to be explicitly considered. In developing understanding, he points out,

We need to understand that articulation and reflection are reciprocal processes. One needs the words to talk about what one does, and in using those words one can see it more clearly. Articulation is not about words alone, however. Skills and activity likewise provide ways through which new teachers can articulate and enact their images of teaching (p. 11).

Reflection, then, is not enough by itself, but a part of a process.

This focus on professional growth through recognizing the contributions of the teacher to teaching is a critical feature of personal practical theory. In a sense, an expert teacher creates her own expertise. This is not to say she does this alone, but rather that she has the essential role to play in bringing together the many influences on her teaching, and that reflection is one of the tools she uses to do this. Reflection on this view is not a one-time only process; nor can it be indulged in designated periods for designated times (a point van Lier makes as well, 1996). It is ongoing and cyclical, and in part—if it is to be truly tied to practices—it occurs in response to the variability inherent in a changing system of many parts. The consistent and aware teacher would be the one who persistently, actively, and critically
engages in the process of reflection, with the focus on persistently. Thus ‘consistent’ here is not being used to imply that a teacher has a timelessly non-contradictory set of beliefs and practices, but rather that she has a persistent critical attitude towards her beliefs and practices which is open to change—possibly even to change from what would be contradictory positions if held at the same time and place. (It may be that such potentially contradictory positions must be subsumed under some more inclusive principle.) The process is not one of certain, smooth, predictable progress, but rather one of fits and starts.

Expertise or professionalization, therefore, appears to be: (1) the ability to make tacit beliefs explicitly available for consideration and to make routine practices controlled (i.e., through deliberative reflection, perhaps leading to experimentation); (2) the ability to make controlled practices automatized, (i.e., through practice); and (3) the ability to make rapid decisions through rapid reflection by internalizing the reflective process. Rapid reflection itself may be a process that is honed through using the results of deliberative reflection in the classroom, where they become subject to the instant decisions required in a highly charged environment. These three abilities allow for flexible and adaptable responses to the highly interactive situation of the classroom in a way that adherence to a theory—even a personal practical theory—cannot.

A teacher’s personal practical theory will be the generalizations she can formulate to describe her teaching. It will correspond to the way she typically exercises the three abilities listed above—the knowledge that emerges on reflection of practices. But teaching itself, practice that is different on each occasion despite whatever similarities it bears to previous occasions, will continue to expand and change. Whether a teacher’s personal practical theory also expands and changes will depend on her continued reflection. In other words, even in personal practical theory, theory underdetermines practice in the sense that practice is constantly evolving through classroom interactions. However, such a view assumes that the teacher is able to make change. Therefore, teachers need autonomy.

**Autonomy and Affordances**

A constantly evolving system assumes that change is possible. This, in turn, assumes that the teacher is free to act in different ways. Thus autonomy for the teacher must be
assumed if her personal practical theory is to not only describe, but also affect, the decisions she makes about her practices. That is, decision-making by teachers implies a degree of autonomy. Kumaravadivelu (1994) describes teacher autonomy as a process that unfolds both formally and informally. Again, the focus is intrapersonal. At the formal level, many teachers acquire professional knowledge of a single method that includes both practical and theoretical components. At the informal level, teachers discover that actual classroom teaching is not fully determined by their professional knowledge. Their personal knowledge, comprised of their actions, observations, and reflections, becomes an integral part of their knowledge base. It is this process of developing personal knowledge that Kumaravadivelu identifies as the source of teacher autonomy. It means that the teacher has gone beyond the narrow confines of a method that determines practices and is determined by theory, to an understanding of how her own practices are related to and informed by her own theory.

Van Lier also discusses autonomy as an essential to teaching. As van Lier writes of practices, 'Every teacher needs to work them out anew in every situation, and in this resides much of what can be called the teacher's theory of practice' (1996, p. 200). Making use of a personal practical theory demands a certain degree of autonomy so that a teacher can make principled choices. While this does not mean (except in a trivially true sense) that every lesson will be taught differently from every other lesson, it does imply that every lesson must be considered as a new experience. Thus each lesson offers its own opportunities, what van Lier calls 'affordances' (2002). While van Lier discusses these in terms of learners making use of affordances, teachers also need to be prepared to recognize and make use of opportunities to enable learning. Relying on a single approach or method is bound to fail later, if not sooner. Flexibility to meet new challenges is necessary. This is true whether by theory one means source, local, or even a personal practical theory. Thus theory always underdetermines practices.

On the other hand, it is not the case that every situation is completely novel. There is at least one overarching common goal—language learning—in all of these situations, and particular situations may have the same objectives met through the same tasks, if not the same activities. Awareness plays a critical role in recognizing both of these factors, but autonomy plays a critical role in enabling flexible responses to be made. These responses are made to
affordances as understood by teachers living and working in particular contexts, however. Therefore the role of context in this broad sense, what Gee (1996) calls Discourse or ‘ways of being in the world’ (p. viii), will be discussed next.

**Sociocultural Context, Discourse, and Teaching**

Throughout this review of the literature, different commentators have referred in different ways to the contributions of the teacher to the teaching process. But despite those differences, a clear trend has emerged away from a conception of the teacher as merely a mechanism by which knowledge is transmitted to the student to a conception of the teacher as an active participant who makes significant contributions to the teaching process. Many of the commentators have used words such as ‘interpretive’ and ‘reflective’, meaning that teachers use their own understandings of their experiences in the classroom as the basis for their procedures. Thus the focus is on the beliefs of teachers, but these beliefs concern more than just narrowly pedagogic information; they also concern a variety of non-pedagogic factors about the context of the teaching situation. These factors will be addressed next by looking at several specific studies of teachers trying to make the transition from teacher development programs to EFL teaching situations. These studies will look at both cognitions of teachers and the context of teaching. After that, a more general approach to Discourse and its implications for teaching will be discussed.

This discussion will rely, to some extent, on reviving a distinction made by Gee (1996) between *discourse* (uncapitalized) and *Discourse* (capitalized). Gee describes *discourse* as ‘connected stretches of language that hang together so as to make sense to some community of people’ (1996, p.90). He describes *Discourse* as ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles…. They are ‘ways of being in the world’; they are ‘forms of life’. They are, thus, always and everywhere *social* and products of social histories (1996, viii).

In the classroom (as well as elsewhere) discourse conveys Discourse, as is evident in Gee’s list of ways in which Discourse is instantiated. Thus the way teachers teach reflects Discourse: the language or discourse by which they communicate with their students, with each other, and with others (teacher developers, parents, and school administrators) reflects the ways of being with
other people or Discourse. One of way of being with people is displayed in power structures, such as whether people, such as teachers, are or are not regarded as equals with others, such as students, theorists, and researchers. This is one of the issues to be addressed below.

Postmethod Pedagogy and the Sociocultural Context

Earlier the postmethod condition and postmethod pedagogy were associated with personal practical theories of teaching. They are also associated with an awareness of the sociocultural context in which any teaching occurs. Kumaravadivelu (2001) links the three parameters of a postmethod pedagogy—particularity, practicality, and possibility—not only to classroom, but also to the social, economic, and political environment. One might confidently add cultural and historical to this list as well. Kumaravadivelu’s point is that these larger concerns impact pedagogy, citing several examples of how conditions outside the classroom affect conditions within it (2001, p. 543).

Although all teaching takes place in a context, it is highlighted when some kind of a ‘transplant’ occurs: of teachers, of students, of teaching methods. That is, many teachers teach in a very different context than the one in which they were educated, from the micro-level of different classrooms and schools and educational systems to the macro-level of different countries and cultures. At the macro-level in particular, these situations may involve very different conceptions of teaching and learning than the expatriate teacher carries with her. Other teachers work or plan to work in their own country, but are receiving instruction in teacher programs which present them with a different conception of teaching and learning than the one they grew up with and in which they are teaching or will be teaching. When teachers are exposed to innovative methods which have no basis in their experiences as learners, and which are not supported by institutional structures and social norms in which they teach, ‘tissue rejection’ can occur (Holliday, 1994, p. 134).

Some studies have examined attempts to teach with communicative methods in non-Western countries. Other studies have examined teachers attempting to acquire and use the communicative language teaching method. These studies provide further evidence that teaching and teaching theory cannot be focused only on pedagogical issues, but must also take account of non-pedagogical issues such as social, economic, and political factors. In other
words, pedagogy implies a Discourse, and if it is transplanted from that Discourse into another Discourse, conflict is not only possible, but inevitable.

Teaching and the Sociocultural Context

Several studies examining the transplanting of 'Western', 'communicative', or 'innovative' teaching methods to non-Western situations, in other words, EFL teaching, have discovered that teaching methods do not necessarily transplant well. Although a few of these studies mention intrapersonal cognitive factors concerning the teachers who are trying to nurture the transplant, all of them mention or discuss at length the interpersonal and environmental conditions of the transplant. These conditions—social, cultural, economic, and political—and their effects on teaching will be examined below. First, several studies that focus on the results of teacher programs will be examined. Next, studies that focus more generally on the wider situation, both teachers and learners in their institutions, will be examined.

As has been discussed, the relationships between beliefs are highly complex. How they are reflected in classroom practices is even more complex. It is no surprise, then, that together they may sometimes appear too complex to describe consistently or coherently. Kennedy discusses this difficulty, illustrating it with examples from several studies of teachers after their in-service courses (1996). While attending the courses the teachers' espoused beliefs and teaching practices were consistent. But after leaving the in-service courses the teachers dropped the new practices and reverted to their former practices, although Kennedy claims their beliefs remained the same. Kennedy attributes inconsistency to how attitudes (personal beliefs about behaviour), subjective norms (beliefs about what others believe about behaviour), and perceived behavioural control (enhancing or limiting factors in the context in which behaviour occurs) together generate intentions that lead to actions; if the links between any of the factors are weak, the intention is also weakened, and thus the action is less likely to ensue (1996). Kennedy suggests that the teachers' intentions were weakened in three ways: actions were evaluated as successful only a fraction of the time; subjective norms were weakened by the pressures of their institutions and the expectations of students and parents; and the teachers lacked sufficient behavioural control to ensure that new practices were followed. Kennedy draws a number of conclusions, the last of which is that the context of
teaching needs to be considered; as a society changes, teaching may change too—but probably not on its own (Kennedy, 1996).

Lamb (1996) found seven ways in which teachers who had taken an in-service course in Malaysia had responded to its ideas a year later. The course had taken a rational-empirical approach to teacher change, assuming that the rationale behind the teaching approach would be persuasive enough to institute change. This was not the case: ‘The brute fact of the matter is that all the participants had forgotten most of the information and ideas they had previously been exposed to’ (1996 p. 142). Other problems included confusion; labelling ‘old’ practices with ‘new’ names; appropriating ‘new’ ideas to be used in ‘old’ ways; assimilating ‘new’ ideas into ‘old’ routines (without adopting the whole approach); adapting but then rejecting ‘new’ ideas; and finally, engaging with the new ideas. Although this last response had not yet clearly produced many changes, Lamb says it may ‘in the long run prove more beneficial’ (1996, p. 146). It is a gradual process of teachers reflecting on new ideas and eventually accommodating them by adjusting their belief systems—in other words, the process Woods describes. Lamb concludes that participants need to confront their own practices in awareness-raising sessions and to choose for themselves what development they would like to make—rather than being given ‘ready-made solutions for pre-determined problems’ (1996, p. 148).

Pennington (1996) discusses the difficulty of teacher change in terms of Krashen’s input/intake/output model. In her study she examined a number of teachers in Hong Kong who were trying to implement the process approach to writing (to which they had been exposed in their teacher development program) in their own classrooms, with varying degrees of success. Pennington explains this by suggesting that teacher change requires accessible input as well as time to process the input, in other words, time to reflect on it. She also draws attention to the transmission orientation of the teachers she studied. That orientation acts as an affective filter preventing input from becoming intake (1996). It also prevents reflection, according to Pennington. Why this is so is not clear, although perhaps Pennington is conflating the means by which information is disseminated (transmission) with the critical stance of the student (passively non-critical).

This theme is also taken up by another commentator. Liou describes how teachers in a preservice course in Taiwan tended to focus their teaching observation reports on practical
teaching issues (2001). Although they regularly engaged in reflective or critical thinking in their reports, according to Liou they did not develop their critical thinking. Citing Pennington, Liou suggests that the transmission orientation of the teachers might act as an affective filter, but also points to the lack of educational and sociocultural support for teacher change (2001).

Pennington and Richards (1997) examined how a group of teachers in Hong Kong applied or revised their teaching principles during their first year of teaching after a pre-service course. The teachers began by claiming belief in the communicative methodology to which they had been exposed, but then ‘they confronted the practical classroom realities of large classes, sometimes unmotivated students, and examination pressure’ (1997, p. 161). These realities ultimately meant that the teachers ‘reoriented their teaching universe away from the communication-driven goals…and towards the product-driven goals’ (1997, p. 169). The authors attribute this failure of uptake in the teachers to several factors: the pre-service course was unable to affect their beliefs deeply enough to create change; their prior experience as students meant they were unable to make substantial changes; the traditional teaching culture was reinforced by other teacher supervisors, administrators, other teachers, and students; the typical difficulties of their teaching situations; their youth; and their inexperience. The authors conclude that instruction is not enough; an apprenticeship model with an extended period of classroom experiences interspersed with guided reflection might be more successful. It would ‘help them adapt their teaching to the realities of their teaching context while developing their value system and practices in a way which incorporates the knowledge gained in their education courses’ (1997, p. 176).

One study done in the former Soviet Union suggests that the transplant problem exists beyond Asia. Kontra (1997) discovered that Russian teachers ‘re-training to teach English’ (1997, p. 242) had very different goals than their teacher trainers did. The teachers had a tendency to focus on classroom practices without recognizing that the methodology underlying those principles was different from the methodology they had been taught as Russian teachers in the Soviet Union. Kontra felt that she needed ‘to help them bring their implicit theories and underlying principles out in the open, to challenge them, and to facilitate change’ (1997, p. 243). It becomes clear in the course of the article that the trainer felt that the teachers had a transmission view of teaching. Kontra describes her position that the methodology course ‘is
not a training ‘recipe’ to copy’ (1997, p. 248). The teachers themselves were apparently divided: ‘8 of the 14 trainees present at the time had been successfully moved into a ‘thinking/reflecting mode’” (1997, p. 243), while the rest apparently were still concerned about getting teaching tips and passing exams. It is not clear whether the other 6 teachers were regarded as unsuccessful because they did not make their implicit theories explicit through reflection, because they did not challenge their implicit theories, or because they did not change.

These studies of teachers show the difficulties involved in making long-term and substantial changes to teacher beliefs and practices. While intrapersonal factors are discussed, other factors also appear to have played a significant role in these teachers’ difficulties in negotiating change. Discourse—in both the smaller context of the actual classroom and in the larger context of sociocultural situations—appears to have affected belief systems so strongly that change could not be maintained once teachers were returned to contexts in which different ways of being were expected. There was a conflict—one that some have described as a cultural conflict.

*Teaching and Cultural Collision*

Several studies that look at the effects of transplanting Western teaching to non-Western situations take a broader view. Rather than narrowly focusing on the successes and failures of teachers, they also look at the classrooms and the cultural context within which classrooms exist.

Holliday’s exploration of the ‘conflict of interests...between different professional groups, between curriculum developers and teachers, and between teachers and students, especially where there are cultural differences’ examines what happens when language—and pedagogy in the form of methodology—are transplanted’ (1994, p. 6). Holliday explores the ways in which communicative language teaching was and was not able to take root in Egypt in the classrooms of institutions participating in a Western-supported curriculum development project.

Holliday (1994) begins by developing the idea that a classroom can be considered a culture. One the one hand, micro analyses of classrooms may ignore the wider social context in
which language learning takes place. On the other hand, the overgeneralizations that come with macro approaches may prevent careful analysis of both pedagogic and non-pedagogic variables that may affect language learning in a particular situation. Holliday suggests that most studies tend to present the conflicts that may arise between foreign language students and teachers from the perspective of the target language community rather than the community of the students and teachers. Indeed, this is the perspective taken by most of the studies described above. Holliday tries to conduct his study from the perspective of the host community.

*Collectionist* and *integrationist* are the terms Holliday uses for how ‘two basic cultures can be distinguished in teacher-professional-academic groups in terms of how the subjects they teach are perceived’ (1994, p. 71). A collectionist educational paradigm has separate subjects focused on content knowledge, with people in hierarchical work arrangements. The integrationist educational paradigm is interdisciplinary and discovery-oriented, with people in cooperative work arrangements.

Holliday argues that Western English-language education follows the integrationist paradigm, while nearly everyone else follows the collectionist paradigm. He suggests that ‘this professional-academic schizophrenia…is at the heart of the difficulties in finding appropriate methodologies’ (1994, p. 73). Thus the collectionist examples he cites show teachers focusing on the ‘theoretical’ side of teaching by emphasizing content knowledge and their positions as authorities, while the integrationist examples show teachers focusing on the ‘practical’ side of teaching by emphasizing inductive learning and their positions as collaborators (1994, p. 80-81).

Students and institutional support also have roles to play. Because students are also a party to these expectations, introducing methodologies without considering educational paradigm differences can lead to difficulties. Further exacerbating the situation is that a methodology practiced within its ‘own’ environment is supported by its ‘own’ institutions (in the West, by the commercial sector), so ‘when an attempt is made to transport it to a state institution…, it is not supported by the host educational environment of the state sector, and disrupts all around it’ (1994, p. 105). Holliday concludes that local factors must be considered as ‘essential’ rather than as ‘constraints’ that inhibit teaching (1994, p. 108) and recommends a gradual approach to instituting change.
Others have also discussed the issue of appropriate methodologies. Shamim (1995) discusses her abortive attempts to introduce communicative teaching methods to a Pakistani classroom. In an observation similar to Holliday’s point about different educational paradigms, Shamim also discovered that ‘the authority structure and norms of interaction’ revealed that assumptions about knowledge, learning, and classroom behaviour were tied to wider cultural norms which predisposed her students to resist innovation (1995, p. 106). For example, student expectations about the roles of teachers and students led them to resist doing assignments and even boycott class. Group work was only effective if the teacher watched over them because it ‘restored my authority’ (1995, p. 109).

Eventually Shamim wondered whether the innovations she instituted were ‘creating psychological barriers to learning rather than facilitating the process which had been my aim’ (1995, p. 109). She points out that even when teachers try to involve their students in the innovation, it is still done from the teacher’s perspective. Because the perception of the innovation is not shared, it becomes a source of conflict. In this case it disrupted the students’ views of both classroom norms and widely held social norms. Shamim says she ‘broke the contract’ (1995, p. 113), and once broken, ‘the learners considered themselves ‘free’ from their ‘contract’ of appropriate classroom behaviour’ (1995, p. 118).

Innovations, therefore, need to take into account the assumptions of students and the norms of the wider community. Shamim concludes that teacher training programs need to help teachers consider both the overt and covert barriers they may face when trying to introduce change (1995). They may also need to look explicitly at the change itself, for again, as with Holliday above, there is an implicit assumption that change is for the better.

One teacher training program that did try this route took place in post-Soviet Georgia (Leather, 2001). Leather recognized that having come from a different culture (British), her reaction was instinctively to regard the new culture as inferior; she therefore felt that ‘the only way forward was a deeper understanding of the two cultures’ (2001, p. 230). This included recognizing that differences in the way teaching and learning were regarded had deep cultural roots. Because ‘it is difficult for the outsider to the classroom culture to decipher behaviours and patterns of interaction’ (p. 232), Leather observed the teachers before the training, taking note of the teacher-fronted whole-class grammar-translation teaching style, although she also
noted ‘that students were unfailingly responsive and keen’ (p. 230). In this way she recognizes that the patterns of interaction include student expectations as well as teacher contributions. In another example, she noted that the teachers, like the teachers Holliday describes, had a collectivist academic/professional culture which valued teacher-controlled, content-based teaching. Thus this group of Soviet and post-Soviet educated teachers were very interested in theory, leading the trainer to begin the course with the theories behind both the transmission model they favoured and the experiential model she favoured because ‘it helped if I began with principles and then moved to practice’ (p. 234). While she concludes that she does not know if the course changed the teachers’ practices, she feels it will ‘at least allow them to reflect on their current practice’ (2001, p. 236). It is interesting that in saying this Leather, like me, assumes that the transmission orientation of the teachers does not necessarily affect their critical faculties.

In these studies, cultures at different levels, both the classroom as a culture and the community as a culture—collided. Others have described such collisions not in terms of culture, but in terms of Discourse. Some of the difficulties of the teachers described above suggest a gap between their espoused beliefs and practices. This would not be the gap between the Discourses of the ‘technical’ knowledge and the ‘practical’ knowledge described earlier in this chapter, but between the Discourse implied by a pedagogic theory and the Discourse of the actual situation in which teaching informed by that theory is being practiced. The teacher may have ‘perfect’ knowledge of a pedagogic theory, and even be able to practice it in the classroom—yet fail to have effective classroom practices because the pedagogic theory, or the practices it endorses, do not ‘fit’ a particular classroom. To find this gap involves looking at where the gap is located. It is a matter of looking at the assumptions underlying methods and the situated expectations of the teacher and students, which means looking at the theories from which teachers work and the places in which they work. With its linguistic and sociolinguistic origins, Discourse draws attention to a wider range of factors than culture. It also focuses attention on the role of language in carrying these many meanings.

For example, when Shamim’s students used words like teaching and learning, they were using them in a rather different ways than did Shamim (1995). Shamim’s use of these words was informed by the Discourse of applied linguistics, as well as the Discourse of the
culture she shared with her students; her students’ use of these words was (apparently) entirely rooted in the Discourse of their culture. The Discourse of English language teaching, then, will next be examined by looking at the non-pedagogical factors that inform it.

**Non-pedagogical Factors and the Discourse of English Language Teaching**

Earlier in this chapter the topic of the gap between technical and practical knowledge was discussed (Ellis, 1997a, 1997b). In that discussion Ellis refers to the different worlds of theorists and researchers in academia and practicing teachers, pointing out that the differences in both language (discourse) and power (Discourse) lead to the gap. Clarke also refers the power differences between theorists and practitioners. This is one possible explanation of why teachers in general have difficulties with theory. To some extent, discourse at the linguistic level reveals differences in Discourse at the social level. Not only do theoreticians and practitioners ‘speak’ different ‘languages’, they also ‘live’ in different ‘worlds’ and are valued to different degrees. This is just as true of teachers in different situations, where the Discourses of teachers and teacher developers collide, or where the Discourses of teachers and the situated classrooms collide.

In asking the question ‘The applied linguist and the foreign language teacher: can they talk?’ Kramsch directly addresses the issue of Discourse (1995). She cites two sources of the Discourse problem: language learning has moved away from its origins in foreign language literature to the language of everyday life, and the growth of applied linguistics has led to terms being used in different ways by different people, depending on their Discourse community. Kramsch identifies at least four Discourse communities related to applied linguistics and language teaching: language teachers, psycholinguists, sociolinguists and literary scholars. She points out that the problem with communication between Discourse communities isn’t merely that they use the same words with different meanings, but that ‘mediation itself between people who are differently situated in the power structure, in historical memory and in social loyalties, is never unproblematic’ (1995, p. 46). But as several of the studies about teacher programs have suggested, even within these Discourse communities there can be communication difficulties. That is, not all language teachers share the same Discourse.
Furthermore, communication is further hindered when the field of applied linguistics ‘intersects with the dominant discourse of political, professional, and commercial ideology’ (Kramsch, 1995, p. 49). Citing a number of examples in these areas, Kramsch concludes that language not only reflects a Discourse community, it also helps to sustain it. Thus information exchange is not enough to bridge the gaps between Discourse communities; it requires investigation of the social, cultural, and historical forces that have created the gaps, too. These forces have also been seen to be at work in the Discourse conflicts between teachers, teacher developers, institutions, students, and communities. The roles of political, professional, and commercial sectors will be considered in more detail by several commentators below.

Phillipson provides an analysis of the imperialist tendencies shown by the spread of English, defining English linguistic imperialism as when ‘the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages’ (1992, p. 47). Thus, more funds and other resources support the English language than other languages, ultimately leading to more benefits for those who are proficient in English, which perpetuates the cycle and reinforces the divide between what Phillipson terms ‘core’ countries which export English and ‘periphery countries’ which import English (1992, p. 17). In exporting language teaching, pedagogy is also exported with it, often through commercial textbook publishers, thus economically benefiting the core nations who publish and distribute language materials. Furthermore, such materials, as well as teachers and the professional organizations supporting them, export cultural, social, and political values as well. Indeed, Phillipson’s detailed analysis of British and American government funding for English language teaching reveals the political and even military agendas that language teaching can carry (1992). That is, by promoting language, the Discourses of publishers and funding agencies are also promoted.

Pennycook looks at both larger economic and social issues as well as their effects on individuals. Pennycook mentions how ‘with the recent changes in Eastern Europe, there has been a rush to learn English, and such organizations as the British Council are scrambling to secure that market’ (1995, p. 35). One can only add that the former Soviet Union is an even larger potential market than Eastern Europe.
Two threats in particular are posed by the spread of English, according to Pennycook: it threatens indigenous languages and it acts as a gatekeeper to prestigious positions. The spread of English parallels the spread of Western business and technology, as well as academia. With this, according to some commentators cited by Pennycook, comes political, economic, and cultural domination, thus reinforcing inequities (1995). Pennycook points out that while this may be true, ‘it is also important to understand how discourses construct and regulate our realities and operate through a diverse range of international institutions’ (1995, p. 49).

Pennycook continues by examining the way in which the spread of English affects people in their daily lives, pointing out that language and Discourse have complex roles to play in people’s lives. They are also changing roles. They ‘can both facilitate and restrict the production of meanings’ (1995, p. 52), leading to resistance rather than domination. Pennycook concludes by advocating the development of counter-discourses in English.

A few authors have investigated the conflicts that arise when English language Discourses are transplanted to other parts of the world. One such author is Canagarajah (1999). Canagarajah’s exploration of English language teaching and learning in the Tamil north of Sri Lanka shows such resistance through the development of counter-discourse. Both students and teachers were found to resist the ways in which Western Discourse affected their classes. Teachers ‘appropriated’ pedagogies, making them more suitable for their own situations (p. 121). Code-switching enabled ‘students to be socialized into the value system associated with either code’, which allowed them to redefine themselves in the most advantageous ways (1999, p. 141-142). Texts were also appropriated, which developed skills needed for negotiating different types of discourse and also became ‘a resource for critical expression’ (1999, p. 169). Canagarajah concludes on a somewhat optimistic note, pointing out that resistance to Discourses can help create the skills needed for the complexities of post-modern life, in particular by helping people create their own voices. What is of particular interest here is the autonomy and critical stance employed by both teachers who ‘appropriated’ pedagogies and the students who ‘resisted’ Discourses. While Canagarajah employs rather adversarial language to describe these events in Sri Lanka, in other situations gentler language—‘adapting’, ‘borrowing’, even ‘co-opting’ (to use just the first three letters of the alphabet)—may better describe the situation. As a former Armenian colleague of mine put it,
Armenian teachers of English needed to keep the local context firmly in view, not abandon their Soviet pedagogical background, and carefully select ‘the best of the West’ where appropriate. She was not advising the kind of eclecticism that Prabhu condemns as much as suggesting that one of the messages of Western second language teaching Discourse concerns teacher autonomy—and that if this message is accepted, it means one can reject as well as accept other aspects of the Discourse, creating locally relevant, locally situated Discourse.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the concept of teaching; the practice of teaching; source theory, local theory, and personal practical theory; the context of classroom and culture as Discourse; and linguistic imperialism. In this review several important themes have emerged. One is the importance of the individual teacher’s beliefs about teaching. This includes both tacit and declarative knowledge from both personal and professional sources. Another is the importance of the context and culture in which teaching occurs. This includes both overtly and covertly held beliefs and values. The key element, however, is the practice of teaching, which always occurs in a concrete location. To wonder why a teacher uses this book and that activity, therefore, is to wonder where in the world a teacher and her students are situated. To search for that answer is to search for the Discourses through which their words and worlds inform each other.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

All research is a search, but for what and in what way? Perspectives on this issue in applied linguistics range from describing it as ‘paradigm diversity’ to ‘paradigm wars’ (Edge and Richards, 1998). Paradigms govern both the aims and methods of research. And although the aims and methods of research are bound together (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), if different aims and methods exist in a field, so too do difficulties for the researcher seeking justification for her research (Edge and Richards, 1998). To clarify the paradigm issue it is necessary to turn to philosophy of science. Therefore, in this section I will discuss (1) what the role of philosophy of science is in this study; (2) what the aims and methods of this study are; (3) what philosophical commitments are implied by these aims and methods; (4) what criteria warrant the adequacy of this study; and (5) what data collection and analysis procedures were followed.

The Role of Philosophy of Science

As one philosopher of social science, Alexander Rosenberg (1995), points out, it falls to philosophy to attempt to answer those questions which the sciences cannot answer—or have not yet answered; and if it is not possible for science to answer them, why that is so. He continues that this is truer of the social and behavioural sciences than the natural sciences because ‘there is no consensus on the questions that each of them is to address, nor on the methods to be employed’ (1995, p. 4). That is, in fields where status and domain are not clearly defined, each individual researcher’s commitment to aims and methods entail epistemic and ontological commitments which should be clearly articulated (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Rosenberg, 1995; Schwandt, 1994; Wolcott, 1992). Thus philosophy of science is as relevant to applied language studies as it is to any field with a claim to being a science. Indeed, there is such a lack of consensus in some areas within applied linguistics that some researchers advocate limiting theories (and thus research) to those that appear (by one paradigm) to have the soundest aims and methods (Gregg, 1990, 1993; Long, 1990, 1993), while, by the same token, others advocate recognizing that different aims and methods may co-exist (Block, 1996;
Ellis, 1990, 1994). Thus the debate on paradigm issues bears strongly on both the scope and direction for the field as a whole as well as the individual researcher. In order to meet this goal, the philosophical and theoretical perspectives behind this study will be addressed in the following sections.

Aims and Methods

There are two reasons why it is perhaps best to begin by considering the aims and methods of this study, and continue by looking at the metaphysical commitments. First, I recognized what interested me and how to pursue that interest before I recognized what philosophical commitments were entailed by those aims and methods. Furthermore, as Wolcott explains, ‘Qualitative researchers position themselves by identifying underlying ideas and assumptions that drive their work and by identifying the procedures they intend to follow’ (1992, p. 4). Second, I am committed to the methodological position (within this field) that empirical data should drive the theoretical vehicle (to extend Wolcott’s metaphor), a position I have held for many years as a teacher, and that is in part responsible for motivating this study. By briefly considering the study itself before considering the ground of the approach I take to it, I follow this belief. My research choices reflect these commitments, even if they are not the ‘party line’ of a single dominant paradigm. Thus I have an even greater need of clearly elucidating my position, as I hope to do in the following section.

The aim of this study is to explore the beliefs that a group of teachers have about teaching and learning in general and about TEFL in particular, and how their teaching reflects their beliefs. Because this study’s focus is on the beliefs and experiences of individuals, introspective and retrospective reporting (through e-mail interviews) is the primary method of data collection. A second method is through my on-site observation of the teachers teaching EFL classes. A third method is in-person interviews about the meanings of these beliefs and experiences for the teachers. This is, therefore, an interpretive study that focuses ‘on the construction or co-construction of meaning within a particular social setting’ with an emic, holistic, semiotic approach (Davis, 1995, p. 433-434). It is grounded on the belief that social reality is constructed intersubjectively, and that access to individuals’ perception of that reality requires their perspective on that reality. But I believe this entails neither a strong form of
ontological anti-realism nor a strong form of epistemological relativism, as some claim it does (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). One reason for not wishing to be subject to such an entailment (besides my disagreement with it) is that, according to Lincoln and Guba, ‘constructivism and positivism/post-positivism cannot be logically accommodated’ (1994, p 116). This seems an unnecessarily restrictive approach to inquiry. Nonetheless, because this study is based on an apparently counter-intuitive position, the compatibility of constructivism and (weak forms of) epistemic and ontological realism will be discussed in counterpoint to the received views in the next section.

**Philosophical Commitments**

**Background: Science, Positivism and Relativism**

In this section I will argue for the relevance of the relativist paradigm in social science research. I will begin with a brief review of the traditional distinction drawn between the positivist/post-positivist paradigm and the relativist paradigm by considering what beliefs about domain, aims, and methods are entailed by them. These beliefs will be examined by looking at two critiques, the intraparadigm critique and the interparadigm critique. The two critiques lead to the relativist conclusion that alternative paradigms are appropriate for the social sciences. This line of argument is followed by a description of relativist paradigms. However, the relativist position also entails certain ontological and epistemological claims which are not uncontroversial. These claims are considered and a more moderate claim presented as my own position. The following section then discusses why I wish to make a more moderate claim and offers support for it which is tied to the aims and methods of this study.

Philosophical discussions of the social, behavioural, human, or ‘soft’ sciences (such as applied linguistics) regularly contrast them with the natural or ‘hard’ sciences. The natural sciences take as their domain the natural world. According to the positivist/postpositivist paradigm, science aims at causal explanations of phenomena through the method of asserting observable or verifiable or falsifiable propositions which can be formulated in first-order predicate logic, thereby enabling science to progress from particular data to general theories, which in turn leads to predictions (Suppe, 1999). An additional aim and method include establishing the unity of science (Oppenheim and Putman, 1999) through a reductionist
program founded on the deductive-nomological model of scientific explanation (Hempel and Oppenhiem, 1999.) This view is believed to entail commitments to ontological and epistemic realism; that is, the aim of science is to discover reality through methods whereby it is possible to know what reality is (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Thus science is privileged through its methods to arrive at solid knowledge which accumulates as science progresses; other forms of inquiry, in particular those with different domains, may certainly aim at providing other insights through other methods, but the farther they stray from the scientific model, the less firm their foundation.

Several differences between the natural and the social sciences immediately emerge. First and foremost is the difference in domain. The soft sciences take as their domain the world of human beings, including individual humans, groups of humans, and those entities which have emerged in the interactions of humans with each other. But if the domain is different, can the aims and methods be the same? One answer is affirmative, and it is to this view I now turn.

Knowledge of these aspects of our life has always been sought. But whether ‘scientific’ knowledge is possible, in other words, whether a social science qua science is possible, is the key issue in the paradigm debate. If one holds that the only ‘scientific’ knowledge is that of causal explanations sought through controlled experimentation, then the social sciences must have the same aims and methods as the natural sciences. In fact this is what has been attempted by many social scientists. ‘They believe that there is a causal theory of human behaviour and that we can uncover models, regularities, and perhaps eventually laws that will enable us to predict human action’ (Rosenberg, 1995, p. 24). Such researchers are described as adhering to the positivist/postpositivist paradigm and, in keeping with the methodological criteria of scientific experimentation, rely on quantitative methods.

A negative answer is also possible to the question of whether different domains can have the same aims and methods. Critics of the positivist/postpositivist view point to the difference in domain as to why the social sciences should have different aims and methods than the natural sciences. These critics are often lumped together under the headings ‘subjectivist’ or ‘relativist’, even though there are a wide variety of positions, not all of which are adequately or even correctly captured by these names. For simplicity’s sake this discussion will use the term
‘relativist’. Guba and Lincoln describe their discussion of the aims and methods of the relativist paradigm as the intraparadigm critique (1994), which is summarized next.

One of the key differences between the positivist/postpositivist paradigm and the relativist paradigm is that the relativist paradigm focuses on the uniqueness of human beings. It recognizes that human social life, with all its variables, cannot be adequately captured by controlled experimentation (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). As Schwandt puts it, the proponents of the different versions of the relativist paradigm ‘share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it’ (1994, p. 118). This is related to how an objective or ‘etic’ perspective may provide an inadequate or inaccurate account of the subjective or ‘emic’ perspective of the participants who are the subjects of the lived experience (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; van Lier, 1988). Van Lier also appeals to a difference between the natural and the human domains. He points out that understanding and explanation are fundamentally different for the human and natural worlds, for understanding is ‘socially constituted’ (1994, p. 331). This is not to say that humans cannot be explained in purely natural terms, but such an explanation does not exhaust our understanding (Ridley, 2001). Focusing on ‘lived experience’ is a rather different aim than focusing on causal explanations.

That is, relativists believe that the social sciences do in fact have a different aim than the natural sciences. According to their position, ‘the social sciences seek to explain behaviour by rendering it intelligible. They uncover its meaning, or significance, by interpreting what people do. The interpretation of human behaviour, on this view, is not fundamentally causal’ (Rosenberg, 1995, p. 19). Thus for the social sciences, the difference in aims leads to a difference in methods.

But such fundamental differences in aims and methods suggest that there are epistemic and ontological issues also at stake, which Guba and Lincoln discuss as the interparadigm critique (1994). These issues return the discussion to the point made earlier, that researchers need to address their philosophical as well as their methodological commitments.

The interparadigm critique is based on a number of arguments from philosophy of science which challenge the positivist/postpositivist position not only in the social sciences, but in the natural sciences as well. Some of the arguments cited, such as difficulties with the

THE CONCLUSION GUBA AND LINCOLN DRAW FROM THEIR ‘INTRAPARADIGM’ AND ‘INTERPARADIGM’ CRITIQUES IS THAT, WITH SO MANY ASSAULTS ON THE SO-CALLED OBJECTIVITY OF SCIENCE, THE POSITIVIST/POST-POSITIVIST POSITION CAN BE QUESTIONED NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS METHODS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF ITS METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTIONS (1994, P. 105.) Thus ‘hard’ science is no longer a privileged source of information, and ‘soft’ science may not only flourish, but even confidently assert itself upon just as yielding a foundation as do the ‘hard’ sciences. The difference in domains, aims, and methods no longer militates against the status of the social sciences as sciences, for the aims and methods of the natural sciences have been seen to be subject to the same forces as those of the social sciences. Alternative paradigms are thus appropriate for the social sciences, even though ‘the paradigms discussed are all still in formative stages’ (1994, p. 109). The following section will consider alternative paradigms for the social sciences.


THE CONSTRUCTIVIST OR INTERPRETIVIST BELIEVES THAT TO UNDERSTAND THIS WORLD OF MEANING ONE MUST INTERPRET IT. THE INQUIRER MUST ELUCIDATE THE PROCESSES OF MEANING CONSTRUCTION AND CLARIFY WHAT AND HOW MEANINGS ARE EMBODIED IN THE LANGUAGE AND ACTIONS OF SOCIAL ACTORS.

HE THEN GOES ON TO POINT OUT THAT EACH POSITION DIFFERS, NOT BECAUSE OF THE METHODS EMPLOYED, BUT BECAUSE OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL MATTERS. GUBA AND LINCOLN ALSO STATE THIS (1994, P. 105). BRIEFLY, THEN, I WILL STATE THAT AS THIS IS AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY, I AM COMMITTED TO
the view that social reality is constructed in the ‘everyday’ sense that ‘we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge’ (Schwandt, p. 125). Thus what we know is relative to how we know it. However, ‘one need not be an antirealist to be a constructivist. One can reasonably hold that concepts and ideas are invented (rather than discovered) yet maintain that these inventions correspond to something in the real world’ (Schwandt, p. 126). This is because the construction of the concepts and belief systems whereby we know the world is a social process.

Thus I disagree with Guba and Lincoln’s assertion that the constructivist position ineluctably leads to strong forms of epistemological relativism and ontological antirealism by turning to the intersubjectivity of the construction of social reality. This is a social process, where ‘the focus here is not on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind but on the collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes’ (Schwandt, 1994, p. 127). This view is discussed and supported by writers as diverse as the psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1934/1999) and the philosopher John Searle (1995, 1999). The next section will discuss why I wish to make this claim and how it is supported by the writers mentioned.

Epistemological Difficulties for Interpretive Research

Just as qualitative researchers find difficulties with the use of quantitative methods, so too do quantitative researchers with qualitative methods. Schwandt asks, ‘What is the warrant for a subjectively mediated account of intersubjective meaning?’ (1994, p. 130). He continues that qualitative research is open to charges of solipsism and relativism, even nihilism’. Schwandt formulates the issue by referring to the difference between making a psychological claim and an epistemological claim. It is nonproblematic to suggest that knowledge is actively constructed rather than being unmediated sense data, that is, to make what he calls a psychological claim about knowledge. But moving from the basis of this psychological claim to the epistemological claim that therefore knowledge does not refer to a real, independently existing world is problematical. He writes, ‘The difficulty here is how to account for the fact of knowledge as a form of theoretical production, the fact that knowledge is somehow available to individuals, and the fact that knowledge is shared and transmitted’ (1994, p. 131).
He goes on to offer three ways of resolving the problem: through an argument for ‘subtle realism’; through pragmatism; and through careful attention to procedural criteria of ‘goodness of interpretation’ (1994, p. 130). Each of these responses will be dealt with in turn.

‘Subtle Realism’: A Social Constructivist Response

Part of a nonpositivist response to relativism is a ‘subtle realism’, as Schwandt calls it, which acknowledges the intuition that the truth or value of a linguistic claim lies in something other than the claim itself (1994, p. 130). Schwandt cites Martyn Hammersley for a description of this position in the following passage:

Hammersley (1992b), for example, argues that interpretivists investigate independent, knowable, actor-constructed phenomena, but denies that we have an unmediated grasp of or access to those phenomena. He maintains that there can be “multiple, non-contradictory descriptive and explanatory claims about any phenomenon” (Hammersley, 1989, p. 135), “without denying that if those interpretations are accurate they must correspond in relevant aspects to the phenomena described” (p. 194) (1994, p. 130).

This is also the philosopher John Searle’s point (1999). He argues that it is consistent for different vocabularies or conceptual schemes to describe the world differently. In making this point Searle distinguishes between an uncontroversial plurality of theories (or paradigms, conceptual schemes and so on) and epistemic relativism.

Yet the challenge remains of accounting for knowledge as theoretically produced, individually available, and socially shared. It can be met, according to Schwandt, by emphasizing the social or intersubjective construction of knowledge. The intersubjectivity of discourse is directly tied to ‘the interpretive turn’ by Rabinow and Sullivan when they point out that interpretation ‘refocuses attention on the concrete varieties of cultural meaning, in their particularity and complex texture, but without falling into the traps of historicism and cultural relativism’ (1987, p. 6). Concrete cultural meaning exists prior to the individual subjects of discourse as a ‘shared world of meaning’. ‘It is in this literal sense that interpretive social sciences can be called a return to the objective world’ (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987, p.6-7). Atkinson and Hammersley also remind us that the origins of the interpretative turn are historically situated in a focus on the empirical (1994).

A somewhat stronger but related approach is advocated by Huberman and Miles who describe themselves as ‘realists’ (1998, p. 182) because they believe that social phenomena are not only mental constructs, but also exist in the objective world. They assert that ‘lawful,
reasonably stable relationships’ (p. 182) exist among social phenomena and from those relationships ‘we derive the constructs that account for individual and social life’ (p. 182).

**A Pragmatic View of Rationality**

In turning to pragmatism, the possibility of multiple theories and methodologies is allowed, without multiplicity degenerating into radical relativism, because a rational means of evaluating them exists. The philosopher of science Larry Laudan suggests that although different scientists working in different times and places may use different methodologies, they are rational as long as they act in ways they believe will promote their aims by making pragmatic judgments about problem-solving success (Laudan, 1996).

It is important to note that for Laudan, science is still characterized by a relatively unified research tradition. In other words, Laudan’s views aim at justifying the multiplicity of methods diachronically rather than synchronically, allowing for science to change through time. There is, however, still the notion that one tradition will become dominant, even if there is a period in which it is not clear which tradition that will be.

Within the social sciences and applied linguistics, however, it is the synchronic existence of multiple theories and methodologies that is to be justified on the basis of pragmatism. Although it is possible that these sciences are still immature, that is pre-paradigmatic, or are in the midst of a paradigm change, an alternative also exists. This is to extend Laudan’s suggestion of pragmatism being the warrant for theory choices across time to its being a warrant for theory choices at the same time, which some have done.

Rabinow and Sullivan (1987) reject the search for a single paradigm for the social sciences by urging that the social sciences focus on the task of understanding the meanings human invest in the world, rather than trying to find a single paradigm, based on generalizations rather than concrete instances, by which a social science can be unified. In other words, they justify methodological variety on the basis of the nature of the domain, the human world.

This view is echoed in applied linguistics by van Lier (1994). Rather than taking theoretical and methodological variety as a Kuhnian ‘preparadigmatic phase’, he writes:

There are many different kinds of work to be done, and all these kinds of work need theoretical and practical dimensions. If different purposes, etc., are legitimate...then a pluralistic view of the field is also legitimate, indeed necessary (1994, p. 330).
Thus van Lier, too, rejects the search for a single paradigm, as do a number of others (Ellis, 1989; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). He continues that rationalism and relativism do not need to be opposed to each other, for even if one is a methodological relativist, one can be rational because rationality can ‘include everyone who has a commitment to reason’ (van Lier, 1994, p. 331). The pragmatic focus is emphasized when van Lier points out that science must be judged by its results, which are judged by their usefulness (1994, p. 335). In fact, much qualitative research (as well as quantitative research) has been explicitly undertaken in order to arrive at practical ‘solutions’ to pedagogical ‘problems’ (Allwright and Bailey, 1994; Ellis, 1989; van Lier, 1994, 1989). Of course, this is not to say that theory-building or the search for knowledge for its own sake is to be forsaken (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Ellis, 1994).

Van Lier summarizes the position argued above while pointing to the next discussion of this study:

To summarize, one can be a methodological relativist while believing in the value of reason and rationality, as that which ‘can be defended against criticism’ (Habermas 1984: 16), as well as in the objective existence of the outside world. One can be convinced of the intimate connection between the context of work and the conduct of theory, without denying the importance of evaluating scientific work (theoretical and practical) in terms of its quality, i.e., its adequacy and value (1994, p.332).

Procedural Criteria

One of Schwandt’s responses to finding a warrant for interpretive inquiry is to focus on procedural criteria. But with the existence of multiple theories and methodologies we have come full circle to Rosenberg’s claim that it is just because the social sciences do not have consensus in a research tradition that their scientific status is questioned, that is, it is not clear how to evaluate the work of the social sciences. So where does this leave applied linguistics, with what appears to be multiple research paradigms?

Laudan suggests that ‘there is no fundamental difference in kind between scientific and other forms of intellectual inquiry. All seek to make sense of the world and of our experience. All theories, scientific or otherwise, are subject alike to empirical and conceptual constraints’ (1996, p. 85). Certainly, qualitative research is attempting to make sense of the world, and while perhaps not all researchers would agree on exactly what the constraints are, many would accept that there are empirical and conceptual constraints of some sort within it. Indeed, these
constraints may point to those aims and methodological norms that will help to define a qualitative research tradition within applied linguistics (without denying the legitimacy of the quantitative one). This is a need that Edge and Richards cite when they claim that ‘the absence of an established tradition in TESOL leaves the door open to poorly constructed naturalistic research, and this provides ammunition for rationalists who deny the value of such research’ (1998, p. 339).

But even without a well-established research tradition, a research study can offer reasons why it should be respected as a source of knowledge, as van Lier suggests by referring to quality as adequacy and value (1994). Even Laudan believes that there is no single or single set of epistemic criteria by which to distinguish between science and non-science, but that this does not prevent us from making other useful distinctions, such as distinguishing between ‘reliable and well-tested claims to knowledge from bogus ones’ (1996, p. 86). It is to efforts in this area in qualitative research that I will now turn. In so doing I will be responding to the initial concern of this section, Edge and Richards’ injunction that ‘the onus is on the researcher to establish his or her own warrant’ (1998, p. 335). They present the researcher with the task of determining her position, voice, and representation by extending the tradition, adopting an alternative stance, or developing her own position. In doing this I will refer to the philosophy of science discussions above (as the warrant for my philosophical position) as well as to discussions from within the social sciences and applied linguistics.

Criteria for Adequacy

Overview of Possible Criteria

The adequacy of interpretive social science research can be judged by several sets of criteria. Denzin and Lincoln write that ‘there is considerable debate over what constitutes good interpretation in qualitative research’ (1994, p. 479). Following Hammersley (1992), they suggest that there are four basic positions: the positivist, postpositivist, postmodern, and poststructuralist.

The positivist view applies the criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity to all research, whether quantitative or qualitative. The postpositivist view (according to Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) comprises several views: constructivist, critical theorist, and
According to the postmodernist view, 'the very idea of assessing qualitative research is antithetical to the nature of this research' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 480). The post-structuralists, like the postpositivists, advocate developing new criteria, 'stressing subjectivity, emotionality, feeling, and other antifoundational factors' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 480).

The criteria by which research can be judged 'flow from the major paradigms now operating', according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 479). As described in the section on philosophical commitments above, this study is done from a constructivist perspective (with ontological and epistemological caveats as given), so it is most appropriate that the constructivist criteria should apply. It will be noted that despite the claimed difference between the postpositivist and constructivist positions mentioned above, in fact the constructivist criteria of truthfulness is described as corresponding to the postpositivist criteria, which in turn correspond to the positivist criteria (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Eisenhart and Howe, 1992). The criteria for truthfulness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin, 1994, p. 508). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 289-331) these correspond to positivist/postpositivist criteria: credibility to internal validity, transferability to external validity; dependability to reliability; and confirmability to objectivity by virtue of both sets of criteria being based on the same underlying concepts. Credibility and internal validity are related to truth; transferability and external validity are related to applicability; dependability and reliability are related to consistency; and confirmability and objectivity are related to neutrality. Guba and Lincoln suggest that this parallelism 'makes them suspect', but that nonetheless their criteria 'have been well-received' (1994, p. 114). Eisenhart and Howe make an interesting point in suggesting that while a specific study will have its own logic and coherence, 'a more general approach to validity must accommodate differences among specific research designs' (1992, p. 655). The parallels between the positivist, postpositivist, and constructivist criteria, and the way
in which Edge and Richards are able to point out the ‘central’ issues addressed by their own criteria for ‘working out one’s own position’ (1998, p. 348-352), suggest that such a general approach may be at work even when it is not explicitly acknowledged.

**Criteria for Truthfulness and Authenticity**

This study, therefore, will address the issues of position, voice, and representation through the criteria for truthfulness—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 114). Each of these will be discussed below with reference to the processes used in this study so that this study can ‘explicate how we claim to know what we know’ (Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 496).

**Credibility**

Credibility answers the question, ‘What happened?’ (Edge and Richards, 1998, p. 345). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 219-301), a credible study may include evidence of the following techniques:

- Lengthy engagement in the field;
- Persistent observation;
- Triangulation of methods and sources;
- Peer debriefing;
- Negative case analysis;
- Member checking.

For this study, the length of engagement in the field is enhanced by the two years I spent living in Armenia and teaching in the TEFL program that is the locus of this study. Thus before this study began I had already established my presence at the site, was known by the participants, and was familiar with the context of the program. I have stayed in touch with the assistant dean of the program and several of the participants in the intervening time. I will now turn to the study itself.

Data collection was conducted over a period of approximately nine months: the first six months through e-mail interviews, followed by three weeks at the site, when I was a non-participant observer.
Triangulation is defined as ‘the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour’ (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2001, p. 112). Its purpose is to establish a level of confidence that the data generated is not distorted by the choice of investigative method. Basically, if different methods produce similar results, there are grounds for a greater degree of credibility. Different sources are another form of triangulation (Denzin, 1978, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It has been pointed out that using a single method with a number of participants naturally produces different data that can be considered triangulated (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2001). Furthermore, the concept of triangulation has been extended from methods to time, space, level, theory, and investigator triangulation, each with its own means of addressing possible shortcomings in credibility (Denzin, 1970, cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2001). I will discuss only those forms of triangulation relevant to this study.

Triangulation was achieved in several ways. First, source triangulation exists because this study used data from six participants. Second, several methods were used to collect the data: e-mail interviews, in-person interviews, and classroom observations. Because the study was conducted over nine months, time triangulation is also present. Furthermore, the participants were asked to expressly comment on the changes they believe they have undergone in their educational and professional careers. The role institutional and cultural norms and practices play in the development of the participants’ beliefs were also examined, although for the most part this relied on the participants’ own reporting on that role. Efforts were made, however, to compare the views of the different participants, and to compare those with my own views based on my observations.

Peer debriefing, which involves someone not directly related to the study comparing the data and the results drawn from it, was be done by a former staff member of the program no longer currently involved in it. Member checking was addressed by providing the participants copies of their interview transcripts to check and encouraging them to retain copies of their electronic correspondence.

Transferability

The data must be rich enough and the interpretation sensitive enough for other researchers to determine if the study is illuminating in another context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316). I leave it for the reader to judge if the data appear rich enough and the study sensitive enough to warrant transferability. Lincoln and Guba urge that it is not the researcher's responsibility to make any such comparisons. Others, however, such as Eisenhart and Howe (1992) and Goertz and LeCompte (1984), suggest that such judgements are appropriate. Eisenhart and Howe point to the question of how worthwhile a study is, that ‘research investigations be comprehensive enough to convey and expose the important and profound problems and issues that arise for practitioners’ (1992, p. 660). Thus I will briefly address this by pointing out that TEFL programs ‘imported’ from the West are becoming increasingly common throughout the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Given concern about linguistic imperialism and the role of TEFL in it (Phillipson, 1992) and the virtually complete lack of English-language research in the former Soviet Union, it seems to me that this study is worthwhile in providing data on how these issues are perceived by some members of one successor state. Furthermore, the experiences of this group of participants are similar to those of others elsewhere in the former Soviet Union: some of them went to the same universities, many of them followed the same curriculum, and most of them read the same books (and in the same language, Russian). They studied, and subsequently taught, in the same educational system. It is only since the break-up of the Soviet Union that differences have begun to emerge, although so slowly and sporadically that in effect the similarities still govern. That is, there is typicality in the situation, which suggests that transferability is possible (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2001). Given these circumstances, the results of this study are likely to be illuminating to EFL teachers and TEFL programs elsewhere in the successor states of the former Soviet Union.

Dependability

Dependability refers to openness about reflexivity and changes in the study. It is addressed through documentation of these changes and their effects on the study. Primary among the many issues is the major change wrought to the design of this study during negotiations for access to one potential site and two groups of participants.
As originally conceived, this study was to have three groups of participants: students enrolled in a TEFL program, graduates of the TEFL program, and staff teaching in the TEFL program, including myself as a participant observer. The Human Subjects Ethics Committee of my own University where I am both a staff member and a PhD student approved my study. I then contacted the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board of the University which was to be the site of my research. They did not approve my research despite the approved documents from my own University’s Ethics Committee, instead sending me a list of changes I was to make. Many of them were relatively minor changes to language, procedures, and document format. There were, however, several major concerns.

The first major change required by the Institutional Review Board of the University was to remove myself as a participant observer because of their concern that students would be under pressure to join the study in order to avoid antagonizing me. In my original research design I had planned to teach in the programme in order to be able to afford a prolonged period of time on site and to discover if having students explicitly reflect on the connections between theory and classroom practices would have any observed or reported effects. I could then compare the current students with past graduates, who had not been asked to explicitly reflect on the connection between theory and practice.

Another change was to the role of the Assistant Dean in distributing and collecting Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms. The IRB appeared to desire complete anonymity for all participants, a clearly impossible task since a number of possible participants were already known to me. They appeared to accept this point, however, once I had removed myself as a participant observer and once I had modified the distribution and collection procedures to completely by-pass the Assistant Dean by placing it in the hands of a new part-time secretary.

A third issue was that I take an on-line human subjects ethics course and submit proof that I had passed it. I had not been informed of this when I made my original submission. The course, although clearly aimed at biomedical research in particular, provided a number of insights into procedural and policy differences between my ‘home’ Human Subjects Committee and the on-site Human Subjects Committee which would have been most helpful if I had been informed of the requirement in a more timely fashion.
Once these points had been dealt with, I resubmitted a revised proposal. However, the IRB refused to reconsider my revised submission. They again raised a number of issues already dealt with, stating that language did not appear that addressed certain issues; however, my copies of the records just as clearly showed that such language did appear. They also raised one major issue which had not been previously raised. The major new objection appeared to concern my access to practicum course records jointly prepared by the TEFL students and their mentors during the practicum course. It is not clear to me whether the IRB had not understand the nature of practicum records or if they changed their mind. Ultimately, it became clear that they objected to my having access to any information via one party concerning another party, regardless of the Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms explicitly addressing my access to such information.

At this point I felt that there was no point inviting staff and current students if I could not use practicum records. The practicum records were to have provided the ‘introspective’ perspective to the ‘retrospective’ of the interviews and the ‘practice’ perspective to the ‘theory’ of the other courses. They were also to have provided a third point of view, that of staff, in addition to the students and myself. Without practicum records I would have only interviews to work with.

I was also frustrated by the fact that in the submitted documents I could find language addressing issues where they said such language did not exist. I lost faith in my ability to successfully complete the review process as I felt there was some unknown, perhaps even irrational, element to it. The spectre of yet new requirements again being raised created the image of an infinite regress which I did not have infinite time and energy to pursue.

I therefore decided to re-design the research project and focus only on the graduates of the program. I could deal with them directly, without having to negotiate access through the University IRB. I would be able to observe them teaching by negotiating directly with their own institutions.

These negotiations with the on-site University IRB shortened the length of time of the research project as well, since the changes the on-site University required necessitated re-submitting my revised research proposal to my own University Ethics Committee. Eighteen months became twelve months, which then dwindled to nine months of contact.
Other references to issues of dependability will occur throughout the text.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to evidence that the data is relevant to the perspective of the study. It is also addressed through documentation. Lincoln and Guba recommend ‘independent audits’ to create an audit trail, which involves identifying the processes by which the study is conducted in order to see how the results are confirmed by the data (1985, p. 289). Extensive use of quoted material meets this criterion.

**Authenticity**

Authenticity is variously described. Guba and Lincoln cite themselves (1989) as identifying authenticity with fairness, and also with ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity. The latter set of four, they acknowledge, ‘to some extent overlaps those of critical theory but goes beyond them, particularly the two of ontological and educative authenticity’ (1994, p. 114). Edge and Richards summarize it as ‘the honest presentation of data’ (1998, p. 351), that is, ‘making available an appropriate selection of the records of the research process…so that readers will recognize a genuinely inhabited statement and feel it worthwhile to ask of themselves, ‘What can I learn from this?’” (p. 351). To some extent this is established by the procedures discussed under credibility and with the extensive use of quoted material.

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Data collection and analysis, which Huberman and Miles (1998) group together under the term *data management*, is defined as ‘the operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval’ (p. 180). Following Huberman and Miles (1998), data analysis includes three subprocesses: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involves the processes by which data is coded, summarized, and themes are found. It involves techniques such as summaries, vignettes, and matrices. Data display involves the processes by which reduced data can be thought about. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involves the processes by which meaning is found in the data, and includes such techniques as comparing and contrasting, noting patterns,
triangulating, and checking results with participants. These processes will be addressed in the following sections.

As Huberman and Miles (1998) point out, the first stage of data analysis, data reduction, can be understood as having begun before data collection in that ‘the researcher chooses a conceptual framework, research questions, cases, and instruments’ (p. 180). They imply that there is a continuum between fully inductive and fully deductive approaches, and suggest that with greater familiarity with the setting and concepts and multiple sources of information, a more deductive approach is indicated. The overall conceptual framework for this study—interpretive research on how a group of EFL teachers in Armenia developed their teaching practices—was indeed chosen even before the research questions had been articulated. It informed the development of the research questions, literature review, and methodology of this study. Therefore the following sections on the actual collection and analysis of the data must be understood in light of this process which began reducing potential data before it was even collected, continued reducing data as it was actually collected, and then further reduced it during processes explicitly designed to do so. It was by no means a fully inductive approach, since I was well-acquainted with both the setting and the concepts, and therefore my approach to analysis ‘takes a more explanatory and/or confirmatory stance’ (Huberman and Miles, p. 185). This becomes particularly evident in the design of the data collection instruments and the analysis of the data, as will be discussed below.

Research Questions

Developing the research questions was the first formal step in reducing potential data to actual data. However, as interpretive research is a reflexive process, the research questions themselves have undergone changes in light of the data that has been collected and analyzed and the conclusions that have been drawn from it. The original research questions were:

1. How do EFL teachers acquire theories presented to them in a TEFL program and how do they use those theories to inform their own teaching practices?
   a. What do the participants understand about their own teaching practices?
   b. What do the participants understand about the methods and purposes of teacher development programmes?
   c. What do the participants understand about source and local theory?
   d. How do the participants integrate theory and practice?
Collection and analysis of the data suggested that both a more general and a more specific approach would be more relevant: more general in that the participants’ beliefs and practices showed that there were other important influences than theory on their practices, but more specific in that as the participants articulated their beliefs, their own personal practical theories were revealed. The research questions were therefore rewritten. As summarized in Chapter One, the research questions this study will investigate are:

i) How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?
ii) What are the influences that shape personal practical theories?
   (a) What is the role of theory, both source and local, in personal practical theories?
   (b) What is the role of personal experience, beliefs and values in personal practical theories?
   (c) What is the role of sociocultural context in personal practical theories?
iii) To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?

The beliefs of the participants concerning these questions were articulated through a series of e-mail interviews, in-person interviews, and observation discussions. However, some beliefs may also involve tacit knowledge not readily accessible to the participant, but possibly inferable through observation and observation analysis. Towards this end classroom observations were conducted. Furthermore, all questions may also involve tacit knowledge not readily accessible to the participants, but possibly inferable through analysis of the e-mail interviews, in-person interviews, and classroom observations. The participants, data collection, procedures, and analysis will be discussed in more detail below.

The Participants

Selection of the participants was the second formal step whereby potential data was reduced to actual data. This section will provide background information on the participants so that it is possible for readers to judge for themselves how the backgrounds of these participants may have impacted the data collected.

All six participants graduated during the 1980s and 1990s from tertiary educational institutions in Armenia. Nune and Hasmik graduated from the premier pedagogical and linguistic institute, located in the capital (Premier Institute); Zara and Varsenik from a well-respected provincial pedagogical institute which was still recovering from a devastating earthquake (Provincial Institute); Lusine from the premier university, located in the capital.
(Capital University); and Irina from one of the ‘new’ universities created after Armenian independence, also located in the capital (New University). The latter was a ‘post-Soviet’ institution; the other five were, in essence, Soviet institutions. This was true even after Armenian independence in 1991, as the basic structures and personnel of these institutions had not substantially changed during the period in which the participants attended them. Because the participants themselves feel that the influence of the Soviet Union was pervasive throughout their own education, the participants’ education prior to their Western TEFL Certificate will usually be referred to as their Soviet education (following some of the participants’ own usage), even though many of them received their undergraduate degrees after Armenian independence. These details are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Undergraduate Education</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hasmik</td>
<td>Premier Institute</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irina</td>
<td>New University</td>
<td>Classical and Germanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusine</td>
<td>Capital University</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nune</td>
<td>Premier Institute</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varsenik</td>
<td>Provincial Institute</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>Provincial Institute</td>
<td>English and Russian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Educational background of participants

All six participants received TEFL Certificates after a year of study at a Western-sponsored institution in Armenia (Western University). Lusine has a Masters’ Degree in TEFL administered by that institution, which included a year of study at a large and respected university in the United States. During the latter part of the period of this study, Zara and Hasmik were enrolled in a TEFL Master’s Degree program being conducted entirely at the same Western-sponsored institution in Armenia.

The teaching situations of the six participants differ greatly (see Table 2). Lusine teaches graduate students part-time at a Western-sponsored university (Graduate University); Zara teaches part-time in a private language programme. Varsenik teaches part-time at the Premier Institute; Nune teaches full-time in the local secondary school system. Hasmik, Irina, Nune and Varsenik offer private tutoring. In addition to their teaching positions, Zara has a part-time job as a translator for a western institution and Lusine has a full-time job as an aid programme administrator. Varsenik also does curriculum development for a private educational centre. Irina and Varsenik also started and ran their own private language school for a period of time prior to this study. Hasmik has also taught in private language schools. This mix of
employment reflects the general economic situation in Armenia: few people can manage to get by with a single job, and even full-time jobs do not necessarily offer as much compensation as working ‘under the table.’ Those teaching at Western-sponsored universities or for Western agencies make liveable wages, but others do not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hasmik</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irina</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusine</td>
<td>Graduate University</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education Aid Programme</td>
<td>Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nune</td>
<td>State Secondary School</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varsenik</td>
<td>Premier Institute</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Centre</td>
<td>Curriculum Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>Private Language Programme</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western institution</td>
<td>Translator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Employment situations of participants

Brief biographical sketches of the participants follow.

_Hasmik_

Hasmik is from the provinces. She graduated in English from Premier Institute in the late 90s. She then enrolled in the TEFL Certificate programme in order to improve her teaching skills. She was teaching in a private language institute while studying, and continued there for several years after completion of the programme. She then enrolled in the MA programme at Western University, which she has recently completed. She offers private tutoring.

_Irina_

Irina is from the capital. She graduated in Classical and Germanic languages in the late 90s from New University, a private university established after Armenian independence. Upon graduation she enrolled in the TEFL Certificate programme in order to improve her language skills. Initially disappointed that the programme did not address language skills, once she understood the programme objective she became satisfied with learning about TEFL. Upon completion of the programme she opened a private language school with Varsenik and taught in it for several years. She described herself as unemployed, but offers private tutoring.
Lusine

Lusine is from the provinces, but received her tertiary education at Premier Institute in the capital, where she majored in English. She graduated in the mid 90s. Her first teaching position was in her former secondary school when she was hired to replace her undergraduate Practicum course mentor who was suddenly taken ill. Although Lusine enjoyed the experience, she decided to work as a translator after graduation. Disappointed in it, she decided to try teaching. After several years of what she describes as unsupervised teaching in schools and institutes, she heard that Western University offered an English program. She enrolled on the assumption that it would improve her language skills, only to discover that it was a TEFL programme with no language courses. She soon found herself enjoying the programme. She returned to teaching for several years, mostly in institutes, and then was granted a scholarship to complete an MA in the West. She then returned to teaching part-time at a private Western-sponsored university and began working full-time for an educational aid programme. In that programme she is responsible for organizing and administering a variety of outreach projects.

Nune

Nune is from the capital. She graduated in English from Premier Institute in the mid 80s. She taught for approximately ten years at the secondary school she had attended as a student. Unsure whether she had enough current knowledge, Nune enrolled in the TEFL Certificate Programme. She continued to teach in her school throughout the programme and after its completion. She became involved in a Western-funded educational exchange programme where she became a teacher trainer. She is involved in doing teacher training, holding workshops, and publishing articles in a local teaching newsletter. She also offers private tutoring. She is currently enrolled in the MA programme at Western University.

Varsenik

Varsenik is from the provinces. She graduated in English in the late 90s from Provincial Institute. She then enrolled in the TEFL Certificate Programme. Upon completion she opened a private language school with Irina which operated for several years. She then began teaching
part-time at Premier Institute. She also does private tutoring. She is currently seeking to study for an MA in the West.

Zara

Zara is from the provinces where she graduated in English and Russian in the mid 90s from Provincial Institute. She was hired by the Institute to teach General English, Grammar, and Phonetics for three years. Zara decided to get an advanced degree in order to qualify for permanent employment. She discovered that the TEFL Certificate programme would meet her purposes and was less expensive than relocating to Moscow, another option. Upon completion she taught part-time in a private language programme and worked part-time as a translator for a diaspora organization for several years. She then enrolled in the Western University MA programme, has graduated, and is currently in the West for a PhD programme in linguistics.

Data Collection

*E-mail interviews*

Structured question (Spradley, 1979) e-mail interviews were conducted from October 2002 to March 2003. These structured questions, developed out of the conceptual framework that initiated this study, were the third formal step of reducing potential data to actual data. They were designed to elicit information that appeared to be relevant to answering the original research questions.

The first set of interviews establishes background information concerning the participants' education and work experience.

Interview One: General Education and Work Background
Interview Two: Classroom Observation Background
Interview Three: Questions Developed from Interviews One and Two

The second set of interviews concerns the understandings of the participants.

Interview Four: Pedagogy and TEFL Development Programs and Courses
Interview Five: The Role of Education
Interview Six: The Role of Individual Differences
Interview Seven: Theory and Practice
The interview schedules are attached in Appendix A.

Occasionally unclear and unexpected responses to the structured interview questions generated further questions that were answered before the next set of interview questions. For example, in Interview One Varsenik responded to Question 5 ‘Do you think TEFL has changed much in Armenia since you began studying English? If so, how? Why?’ by indicating that Western University had changed it. This response led me to follow-up with the question, ‘Do you mean that [Western University] has had an influence on other educational institutions? How? Or do you mean that all of you who have graduated are making the difference? How?’

The questions for Interview Three and some of the questions for Interview Seven were also based on previous interview question responses. For example, a number of the participants’ responses to the structured questions of Interview One: Question 4 ‘Could you describe the circumstances that led you to choose teaching English as foreign language (TEFL) as a career? You may want to discuss: Why did you think about it? What did you do to prepare yourself for it (courses, study programs, workshops)? Why did you choose those particular ways of preparing for a career in TEFL?’ and Question 5 (quoted above), led to the following question being asked of all the participants in Interview Three: Question 1 ‘What do you mean by Soviet (or Russian) pedagogy?’

The e-mail interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants. They were allowed to write as much or as little as they wished. The following chart indicates the word counts of the interview responses. (Word counts also include questions. Follow-up questions and comments to interviews are included in the word count of the original interviews.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>Lusine</th>
<th>Zara</th>
<th>Nune</th>
<th>Varsenik</th>
<th>Irina</th>
<th>Hasmik</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td>3992</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>3256</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>1073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>2048</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1474</td>
<td>1203</td>
<td>1203</td>
<td>1336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 3</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>1494</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 4</td>
<td>1157</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 5</td>
<td>1683</td>
<td>1228</td>
<td>3572</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>1023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 6</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>1801</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 7</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>12866</td>
<td>9367</td>
<td>12472</td>
<td>4641</td>
<td>4563</td>
<td>6228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: E-mail interview word counts*

*Classroom observations*

Two classroom observations of each participant’s teaching were conducted during April 2003. The sole exception was Irina, who had described herself as unemployed at the time.
when the observations were arranged. Observations were determined by the availability of the participants. Classes were audio recorded where permission was obtained and accompanied by notes. Notes were used where permission to record could not be obtained. Note-taking was based on finding confirming and disconfirming evidence of themes about classroom practices and theoretical beliefs that emerged from the e-mail interviews. Observation procedures for each participant (except Irina) are described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Teaching Situation</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hasmik</td>
<td>private tutoring; undergraduate student</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusine</td>
<td>classroom; graduate students</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nune</td>
<td>classroom; secondary students</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varsenik</td>
<td>classroom; undergraduate students</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>classroom; adults and mixed students</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Classroom observation situations and data collection

I observed Hasmik tutoring a recent university graduate for the TOEFL examination for two one-hour back-to-back sessions held in her home in a small room that doubled as her study and nursery for her recently-born baby. (During the tutoring sessions Hasmik’s baby was elsewhere in the house). I observed back-to-back sessions because Hasmik and the student had had to rearrange a session of their usual schedule for reasons I did not investigate. Hasmik and her student sat at a desk with computer (which was loaded with a TOFEL software programme) while I sat a few feet away on a daybed. The recorder was placed on the desk between Hasmik and her student. The first lesson was a writing lesson and the second lesson was mostly a listening lesson. The second lesson was meant to include a reading lesson but a family matter called Hasmik away, so I helped the student with the reading lesson and did not record that portion of it.

I observed Lusine teaching Masters degree business majors at Graduate University for two fifty-minute classes held one week apart. I sat towards the front and to one side of the classroom so that I faced both the teacher and the students. The first class was the last session of a negotiation role play. The recorder was placed on the teacher’s desk at the front of the room during the whole-class parts of the lesson at the beginning and end. When the students arranged themselves into two teams for the negotiations, I moved between the two teams with the recorder, but much of this could not be transcribed because the students often spoke at the same time. The second class was a writing lesson. I sat at the front and to the side with the recorder placed on the teacher’s desk. In addition I accompanied Lusine to one
of a series of seminar she held with a group of secondary teachers on topics related to changes in education in Armenia; the one I attended was on the changing self-image of young women. I did not record this seminar, although I took a few notes. (The seminar was conducted in Armenian and I do not have enough Armenian to have understood any more than the general gist of the seminar.) Lusine and I discussed the seminar afterwards. I also visited Lusine at her second job at a Western-funded educational aid organization (which sponsored the seminars), met with a number of the staff there, and discussed the aims and programmes of the organization with the director. I did not record these discussions, although I took notes and was given brochures and website addresses to consult.

I observed Nune for two different forty-five minute classes held at her school one and half weeks apart. The first class was upper level secondary (Grade 9, approximately age 15). I sat at an unused broken desk towards the back and to one side of the classroom. The recorder was placed at the teacher’s desk at the front and on the same side of classroom where I sat. The lesson was a thematic integrated skills lesson on the topic of friendship, covering speaking, writing, listening, and grammar and following an earlier reading lesson on the same topic. The second class was lower level secondary (Grade 3, approximately age 10). I shared a desk with a student chosen by Nune and involved myself in the lesson activities with that student and others seated near her at Nune’s suggestion. The recorder was placed at the teacher’s desk at the front and centre of the classroom. The lesson covered speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar and followed earlier lessons on the topics of family and jobs. I also attended a two-hour student show organized by Nune during the school’s ‘English Week’, another two-hour student show at another school organized by one of Nune’s colleagues who attended the teacher-training seminars Nune gave, and after both mid-morning shows had coffee, brandy, and sweets with the Heads and English Departments of both schools. I did not record any of these events.

I observed Varsenik teaching third-year undergraduate students at Premier Institute for two fifty-minute classes one and a half weeks apart. Both lessons covered reading, vocabulary and speaking. I sat at the back of the classroom to one side. I was not given permission to record and therefore took notes only.
I observed Zara teaching tertiary students and non-student adults in a private language programme twice for the first hour of two two-hour lessons one week apart. I sat at the front and to one side of the room so that I was parallel with the teacher. The recorder was placed on the teacher’s desk at the front and centre of the room. Both lessons were general English lessons with a conversational focus, although both also included listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar.

The main purpose of the classroom observations was to find confirming and disconfirming evidence in practice of the participants’ espoused beliefs. Thus they served as a means of triangulating data gathered in the e-mail interviews. An additional purpose was to generate further data based on practices that might reveal tacit beliefs that the participants had about teaching. Therefore I did not use standard observation schedules as they did not serve my purpose of investigating a particular teacher’s practices based on her particular espoused beliefs. The observations were structured according to the following possible themes, individually developed as actual themes based on the e-mail interviews of each participant.

**Interview One**

- evidence of description of teaching situation
- evidence of reasons for teaching EFL
- practices related to beliefs about changes in teaching EFL in Armenia

**Interview Two**

- practices related to planning
- practices related to stating lesson objectives
- practices related to giving instructions
- practices related to timing and pacing of activities
- practices related to variety of activities
- practices related to flexibility in executing plans and activities
- practices related to types and amounts of interactions
- practices related to feedback

**Interview Three**

- practices related to beliefs about Soviet pedagogy
- practices related to beliefs about Western pedagogy
- practices related to individual descriptions of ‘good teaching’

**Interview Four**

- practices related to beliefs about Methods
- practices related to beliefs about Materials
- practices related to beliefs about Psycholinguistics
- practices related to beliefs about Curriculum and Course and Design
- practices related to beliefs about Teaching Speaking and Listening
- practices related to beliefs about Teaching Reading and Writing
Interview Five

practices related to beliefs about the aims of education
practices related to beliefs about the role of EFL in Armenia
practices related to beliefs about students and teacher views of EFL

Interview Six

practices related to attention to learning styles
practices related to attention to personality
practices related to attention to motivation

Interview Seven

practices related to planning
practices related to feelings while teaching
practices related to thoughts while teaching
practices related to unexpected classroom events
practices related to reflecting
practices related to influences on teaching

Before observations I reviewed the participant’s e-mail interviews and my coding of them and noted the specific themes that had emerged for the particular participant. This enabled me to triangulate data from the e-mail interviews. For example, in Interview One Lusine mentioned that one of her reasons for taking up teaching was that she wanted to teach her students to think for themselves, a practice related to her reasons for teaching EFL. I therefore looked for evidence of this in her classroom (see p. 166). In Interview Five Nune mentioned that one of the aims of education was developing a sense of identity. This led me to look for evidence that her lessons offered opportunities for students to develop their identities (see p. 167-168).

The classroom observations were transcribed broadly. The transcription system is presented in Appendix B.

Oral interviews

One semi-structured (Spradley, 1979) one to two hour in-person oral interview of each participant was conducted on-site in April 2003. It had two purposes. One purpose of the in-person interviews was to allow for further opportunity to develop themes that had arisen in the e-mail interviews. The second purpose was to allow the participants an opportunity to articulate possibly tacit beliefs about their teaching as revealed in their practices based on the classroom observations. Therefore the themes of the questions were developed from different sources for
different reasons: the classroom observations, in order to articulate the participants’ beliefs about their classroom practices; and the analysis of the e-mail interviews, in order to further articulate the participants’ theoretical beliefs. For example, the structured questions for Hasmik’s interview were:

1. How do you make TOEFL interesting for your students?
2. How do you decide what work you’re going to include?
3. I noticed that you had a certain approach to how you deal with teaching it. (Tell me about it.)
4. I didn’t have much of a chance to see the reading. (Tell me about it.)
5. Since I didn’t have a chance to see you teach other types of classes I was wondering what you did in a class.
6. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
7. What’s the role of grammar?
8. What do you think led to your beliefs about grammar?
9. What kinds of courses influenced your teaching?
10. What else has influenced your teaching?
11. Is learning a conscious process?
12. What about teaching?
13. Do you think about what you’ve done when you finish teaching?
14. Do you have anything else to add?

For example, questions 1 to 5, 7, 8, 11, and 12 were designed to reveal possibly tacit beliefs based on what I observed about her practices. Other questions were designed to allow Hasmik an opportunity to expand on her answers in the e-mail interviews. There were two reasons for these questions. Question 9, for example, was designed to allow Hasmik an opportunity to expand on what had been a relatively short answer in the e-mail interview. Furthermore, based on responses other questions were added to check responses and probe for more information (Richards, 2003). For example, in response to the question, ‘How would you describe yourself as a teacher?’ Hasmik compared her older and younger students by name, which led me to check her answer with, ‘So you’re stricter with teenagers?’ It also led me to probe further with the question, ‘Where did you learn to treat students this way?’ (This probe was related to one of the structured questions about influences on teaching.) Hasmik indicated that experience taught her to do this, and this led to yet another probe, ‘Are there other things you’ve learned from experience?’ Other probes were based on information from the e-mail interviews that might profit from being readdressed in light of the classroom observations and the in-person interview. For example, one question I asked Hasmik was, ‘At one point in the email interviews you mentioned the leading role of the teacher, yet you’ve spoken a lot about students. How do you reconcile these two views, the leading role of the teacher, paying attention to the student?’
By asking this question I gave Hasmik an opportunity to articulate and clarify what appeared to be possibly unclearly stated or inconsistent beliefs.

The following table shows the word counts of the in-person interviews. (Word counts include questions.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Interview</th>
<th>Lusine</th>
<th>Zara</th>
<th>Nune</th>
<th>Varsenik</th>
<th>Irina</th>
<th>Hasmik</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10,450</td>
<td>14,724</td>
<td>11,495</td>
<td>6330</td>
<td>8107</td>
<td>5877</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5: Oral interview word counts*

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was the fourth formal step in reducing data and the first step performed on actual data. Huberman and Miles refer to it as an 'interactive process' (1998, p. 180).

Data was coded and analyzed through constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This has been described as a simultaneous on-going process conducted from the beginning of data collection to after the completion of the data collection (Cohen et al, 2000; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Goetz and LeCompte, 1985; Merriam, 2001.) In this way the data was reduced (Huberman and Miles, p. 180).

Glaser and Strauss describe coding as 'noting categories' (1967, p. 106) under which incidents can be subsumed. ‘Incidents’ are clarified by Lincoln and Guba as ‘units of information that will…serve as a basis for defining categories’ (1985, p. 344). Such units should be ‘aimed at some understanding’ and ‘be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1975, p. 345). Ellis and Barkhuizen call these units of information the ‘content’ (in press). The codes themselves refer to themes or concepts ‘that represent at the more abstract level the experiences, ideas, attitudes, or feelings identified in the data’ (Ellis and Barkhuizen, in press). As noted previously, developing research questions and instruments begin the data reduction process (Huberman and Miles, 1998). It also impacts the coding process since, to some extent, codes were based on the themes raised by the research questions.

Once an incident was assigned a code, other incidents were compared with it. Lincoln and Guba describe this as a tacit process based on whether incidents appear to ‘look-alike’ or ‘feel-alike’ (1985, p. 347). As this comparison continues, its properties will become apparent. Such properties can be described by a rule according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 348).
Once the rule that characterizes the properties has been established, the various incidents should be reviewed to ensure that they do fit under that category by the rule as well as by the original tacit decision. Ellis and Barkhuizen call this rule an 'operational definition' (2004, in press). Codes are of two types: those the researcher constructs and those that appear in the language of the participants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967.)

Codes were then compared and reduced to higher level groupings (Ellis and Barkhuizen, in press) or categories. In this way the actual data was further reduced (Huberman and Miles, 1998). This process involved analyzing the codes in order to discover possible relationships or ‘patterns’ between the codes (Ellis and Barkhuizen, in press). This was done twice: horizontally for common themes that emerged from all the participants’ responses to a single interview and vertically for individual developments within each participant’s corpus of data (to be discussed in more detail below). These were based on the frequency of codes, connections between codes (at the content level) made by participants, similarities between codes, and connections between codes made by the researcher, based on my practical and theoretical knowledge (Ellis and Barkhuizen, in press). Through these still higher level groupings the actual data began to be displayed (Huberman and Miles, 1998).

An example will be given of this process based on Interview One: Question Four, the first question that was designed to go beyond background information. Lusine was the first participant to respond and thus I will use her for the example. Question Four asked, ‘Could you describe the circumstances that led you to choosing teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as a career?’

**Interview One: Question 4 Codes: Lusine**

1. did not plan to become teacher
2. detested idea of it
3. random choice without intrinsic motivation
4. learn to understand Beatles
5. only choice
6. what education prepared her for
7. was in demand
8. fell in love with teaching
9. could share knowledge
10. enjoyed exchange of ideas
11. students affected by her words
12. lacked confidence to teach at first
13. teacher authority in Armenia is great
14. students depend on teacher
15. do I have a right to teach?
16. students believed her as truth
17. not ready to teach truth
18. asking friends for what worked
19. observing colleagues for what worked
20. remembering own learning experiences
21. thinking what was effective for her would work for students
22. teach students how to question teacher
23. teach students how to think for themselves
24. teach students how to discover themselves
25. loved moments of hesitation and search
26. learn while teaching
27. set out on quest in best company
28. didn’t know about TEFL
29. thought of continuing studies
30. heard about Western University
31. life-changing experience
32. inspired curiosity, led to MA
33. plans to continue
34. was practical
35. wanted to learn underlying theories

Codes 1-9 informed the category ‘why teach’. However, upon analysis it became clear that despite being in the context of incidents assigned codes 1-3 and 5-9, code 4 did not belong in the category ‘why teach’, but in the category ‘why study English’. This led to establishing the rule that codes about teaching needed to be directly oriented to the activity of teaching rather than learning outcomes. This did lead to some difficulties in other cases in that the two processes were often linked by the participants. Such linkages are examples of how at the content level the data (or rather, the participants) could be seen as presenting patterns to the researcher. A larger issue arises if this practice is extended by the researcher because it appears to be emblematic of the views of the participants. I have therefore addressed the issue of making higher level inferences about beliefs about learning based on teaching practices in Chapter Five.

Some codes were used in multiple categories. For example, code 4 was also used in the category ‘generational differences for learning English’; codes 5 and 6 were also used in the category ‘aims of Soviet pedagogical education’, and code 7 in the category ‘changes in Armenia’. The category ‘aims of teaching for students’ was informed by codes 9, 10, 22-24, while the related category, ‘aims of teaching for teacher’ was informed by codes 17, 22, 25-27. It should be noted that code 22 appears in both of these categories, since it points in two directions, to both the student and the teacher. It is another example of a code that presents a pattern to the researcher, again in a case of how the participants themselves see links between teaching and learning. Codes 13-17 informed the category ‘role of teachers in Armenia’. Codes
18-21 informed the category ‘learning how to teach’. Codes 28-35 informed the category ‘professional development’. Code 32, 34 and 35 also informed the category ‘why Western University’. Code 34 and 35 were also used in the category ‘aims of Western TEFL program’ and ‘theory versus practice’.

Many of these categories were informed by codes from other e-mail interviews and the Oral Interview. For example, the ‘aims of Soviet pedagogical education’ category was established in Interview One and led to the development of Interview Three: Question 2: ‘What do you mean by Soviet (or Russian) pedagogy?’ and 3: ‘How does that compare to what you learned at [Western University]?’ For example, Lusine’s responses to Question 2 included the codes extremely product-oriented; huge importance attached to teacher; teacher viewed as expert; teacher had all the answers; teacher in role of judge; pedagogy influenced by ideology. Again, analysis revealed that three of these codes—teacher viewed as expert; teacher had all the answers; teacher in role of judge—were difficult to categorize. Did they belong in the category ‘aims of Soviet education’? Theoretical considerations about how the transmission view of teaching implies a product orientation with the teacher as the expert who delivers the product led to the decision to retain the codes in this category on the strength of the participants’ descriptions and my own understanding of their Soviet pedagogical education being based on the transmission view of teaching. But the same codes were also used in the category ‘the role of teachers in Armenia’ when similar incidents were found and coded in the responses of other participants without Soviet pedagogy being explicitly mentioned. This use of the same code for both categories reflects the fact that teachers in Armenia were the products of the Soviet educational system, but also reflects the fact that being a teacher in Armenia does not necessarily imply embracing the aims of Soviet pedagogy.

For some participants, the category ‘aims of Soviet pedagogical education’ was also informed by codes from Interview One: Question 5: ‘Do you think TEFL teaching has changed in Armenia since you began teaching English? If so, how? Why?’ For example, Lusine’s response to this question generated the codes incompetent at using language and only learned ABOUT language (as well as a number of other codes related to other categories). Also, for some participants the category ‘aims of Soviet pedagogical education’ was also informed by Interview Six: Question 2: ‘Could you describe your own EFL learning experiences?’ In the first
case, when the incidents that formed the code generated by Interview One: Question 4 were compared with the incidents described in the response to Interview Three: Question 1, it was because I had created the construct. However, in the second case, when incidents described in responses to Interview One: Question 5 and Interview Six: Question 2 were compared to those that generated the code in Interview One: Question 4, the constructs were in the language of the participant. Virtually all of the codes are in the language of the participants, which is not surprising given their ability to articulate their ideas. Many of the categories, however, are not, since they are based on my perception of which codes are related to each other.

Once all the data had been coded and categories established, these were organized into still higher level groupings. In this example, the category ‘aims of Soviet pedagogical education’ was grouped with ‘methods of Soviet pedagogical education’, ‘Soviet pedagogical courses’, and ‘Soviet Practicum course’ to form the theme ‘Soviet pedagogical education’ which ultimately became one of the subheadings of Chapter Four. This practice extends to other chapter subheadings as well, although it is not surprising that the interview questions themselves to some extent generated categories and therefore also chapter headings. This was the stage at which the data was further displayed in ways that led to being able to draw conclusions.

An example of the process of organizing categories into themes will be given. When I received Interview One from Lusine, I read it several times to establish the initial tacit codes. I then began filling our note cards with those codes, i.e., short summaries, and in some cases, where her words were particularly memorable, quotations. I soon realized that writing each summary or quotation on a separate card would generate hundreds of cards for Lusine’s first interview alone. I therefore began looking for similarities between codes, creating cards with groups of coded incidents, or categories. For example, codes 13-17 and 22 were closely related because Lusine gave codes 12, 15, and 17 as the results of the reasons given in the incidents described by codes 13, 14, and 16, and code 22 was her response to her dilemma. By grouping them these connections were preserved. This card was headed with the category ‘how to teach: no confidence’. Later analysis of the cards revealed that codes that I had initially grouped together sometimes needed to be separated out. Thus a separate card was made for code 22 since it went beyond describing Lusine’s lack of confidence by supplying her solution to
it. It was therefore listed with codes 23 and 24. Eventually it became clear that even the ‘lack of confidence’ from codes 12 and 15 could stand separately from the ‘role of teachers in Armenia’ (code 13) and ‘student expectations: depend’ (codes 14 and 16). Thus cards sometimes had multiple headings to show multiple categories. Since the cards were ultimately laid out in physical patterns that displayed the connections between the data and from which the rhetorical structure of the chapters was derived, when necessary new cards were made so that the same codes could be in used in different places.

E-mail interview data were coded twice. First, as the responses to each interview arrived, each participant’s interview was individually read and coded according to the process described above. At the beginning of the data collection I anticipated receiving all of the participants’ interviews at more or less the same time and therefore being able to code all of the responses to Interview One, then all of the responses to Interview two, and so on. This did occur for the first interview, but to lesser extent for the other interviews because some of the participants took much longer than others to respond. In those cases I reviewed my coding of the other participants’ responses to the interview before I began coding the ‘late’ interview. This first set of codes pertained to the categories that appeared across responses to interview questions. This approach to the data could be termed horizontal. Second, after all the interviews with a particular participant were received, that participant’s corpus of interviews was reread and coded again. Thus all of Armine’s interviews were coded, then all of Beata’s interviews were coded, and so on. This approach to the data could be termed vertical. This second set of codes enabled each participant’s understandings of the research both as a reflective tool and as a reflexive tool to be addressed, thus enabling any developments or changes in that understanding to emerge. Many of the codes from the horizontal coding were repeated, but other codes were also applied. (This also means that two sets of note cards exist, one set for the horizontal coding and one set for the vertical coding.)

Classroom observations were analyzed in light of the pre-established categories based on the analysis of each participant’s e-mail interview data as described above since their primary purpose was to triangulate articulated beliefs. For example, as mentioned above, in Interview Five Nune revealed that she believed that one of the aims of education was to help create a sense of identity. As I observed her class I noticed a discussion on friendship that
concluded with some rather pointed comments about developing a sense of identity. On reading the observation transcripts I noted this section as relevant evidence of Nune meeting this espoused belief in her practices and copied it to the suitable location when writing (see p. 167-168). Classroom observations were also tentatively analyzed in another way while on-site and before they had been transcribed. While observing I made field notes in which I noted practices that suggested tacit beliefs which had not been articulated in the e-mail interviews. These guided the development of in-person interview questions as mentioned above.

In-person interviews were coded once, vertically, since questions for the in-person interviews were structured on the basis of each participant’s classroom observations and e-mail interview data. Coding was done on cards which were grouped with cards with similar codes in the process described above. This enabled the appropriate cards to be grouped with e-mail interview cards, and thus they could also stand in for classroom observation data where relevant. For example, Nune discussed the classroom observation incident on friendship (mentioned above) in two ways: as a way to get shy students to speak, and as a way to get students to learn about themselves. The former belief was coded as evidence of appealing to personality differences and the latter as evidence of meeting the aim of developing a sense of identity. Ultimately these were grouped into higher level categories which formed chapter sub-headings. Personality differences was subsumed under individual learner differences and learning about themselves was subsumed under aims of language teaching.

Triangulation was achieved through these processes in two main ways. Source triangulation occurred as data from one participant was compared to data from other participants. For example, all of the participants, teaching students of different ages and backgrounds in different places, attributed their students’ main motivation for studying English to the desire to improve employment prospects, thus validating this belief. Methodological triangulation occurred as data from the e-mail interviews, classroom observations, and oral interviews were compared. Several examples of confirming evidence have been cited above. An additional one is Hasmik’s belief in the importance of grammar. In her e-mail interviews Hasmik brought up the subject of grammar several times. For example, in Interview One she described her own successful structure-focused language education (while pointing out how little she learned about teaching English). In Interview Two she described a grammar teaching
lesson at which she had been observed, noting the mentor's comments that she had focused too much on explicit grammar explanations. In Interview Three she wrote approvingly of the strong structure focus of tertiary English language education in Armenia (again pointing out its weakness in presenting teaching practices). In the oral interview, Hasmik described grammar and vocabulary as the foundation of language learning. She again described her own language learning, focusing on her successes in learning grammar structures in particular. She gave examples of people unable to communicate successfully which she attributed to their lack of explicit grammatical knowledge. In the classroom observation, she focused her student's attention on grammar points in a lesson which she described as a writing lesson about the different rhetorical patterns used for different essay prompts. Thus the e-mail data code grammar-translation in the category ‘Russian/Soviet pedagogy’ could be matched with the oral interview codes grammar-translation and good at grammar in the category ‘how the participant learned English’ and importance of grammar and learn grammar explicitly in the category ‘grammar’. The classroom observation data enabled these espoused beliefs to be matched with her practices several times (see p. 227-228). In this way data from the three different sets were triangulated to present Hasmik as a teacher with a personal practical theory that was consistent on the value of explicit grammar knowledge in language learning and teaching.

One example of where disconfirming evidence prevented espoused beliefs from being triangulated will also be cited here. Nune wrote approvingly of communicative language teaching and Western language teaching approaches in several places in her e-mail interviews in ways that strongly implied that she practiced communicative language teaching. In the oral interview, she explicitly described one of her observed lessons as communicative. However, the classroom observations did not corroborate this. Rather, the classroom observations corroborated other beliefs Nune espoused about language learning and teaching that appear to be much more in line with the descriptions all of the participants gave of what they described as ‘Soviet’ language teaching practices (such as the use of translation) and of what their Soviet language pedagogy course book describes (such as learning as a step-by-step process facilitated by the teacher).

Summaries which identified the key issues were then written and analyzed for any explanatory power that pointed to grounds for tentatively asserting theoretical implications in the
These became, in essence, the first draft of this study. That is, the findings were interpreted ‘to answer the research questions and to reach conclusions’ (Ellis and Barkhuizen, in press).

In these ways constant comparison was carried out in the four stages described by Glaser and Strauss: (1) comparing new data with previous data in the same category and with other data in the same category; (2) integrating categories; (3) bounding the theory; and (4) setting out the theory.

**Conclusion**

Applied linguistics, as one of the social sciences, has had to deal with what often appears to be a rift between two opposing camps. The positivist/postpositivist camp seeks to ground the ‘soft’ sciences by following the ‘hard’ sciences, focusing on theory-building that leads to predictions through quantitative research. The relativist/constructivist camp seeks to ground (or in the case of the more radical, ‘un-ground’) the ‘soft’ sciences by focusing on differences in domain, aims, and methods, focusing on gathering data and making it intelligible through qualitative research. Those who tend towards the view that this is, indeed, a rift, tend to see strong philosophical commitments entailed by each camp’s positions. Since the philosophical commitments are incompatible, it follows that the methodological positions are also incompatible, thus increasing the rift.

Yet such strong views are not the only ones possible. I have taken the middle ground, respecting common-sense philosophical commitments while also acknowledging that relativist arguments force a more delicate description of what constitutes knowledge and reality. Such a description may be summarized by saying that the differences in aims and domains (leading to differences in methods) is perhaps best described as ‘aspectual’, that is, two sides of the same coin, a view perhaps most thoroughly explored by Spinoza in the 17th century. In other words, as Rosenberg reminds us, the controversies of today are not new, but ones that have been around for centuries, even millennia (1996, p. 211). In light of such a long history, a tolerant position that allows for continued exploration of ideas—a situation Spinoza himself sought in the relatively free intellectual climate offered by the Netherlands during his lifetime—seems the just view. In that spirit, this study finds itself using the methods and seeking justification according
to the relativist/constructivist camp, while sympathizing with the aims and philosophical commitments and recognizing the contributions of the positivist/postpositivist camp. This section has sought to establish the consistency of doing so, while providing a description of the ways in which this study will warrant its claims.
CHAPTER FOUR

Espoused Beliefs about Influences

Introduction

The next two chapters identify some of the beliefs and practices of six Armenian EFL teachers in order to show ‘how teachers know what they know to do what they do’ (Freeman, 2002, p.1). Thus Chapters Four and Five will contribute to the answer of the first research question, ‘How do teachers develop personal practical theories?’, by considering the beliefs and practices of the participants as organized under headings based on the themes that emerged in the analysis of the data as described in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will focus on some of the espoused beliefs of the participants as revealed in each participant’s series of seven e-mail interviews and one in-person interview. It will cover themes related to the participants’ beliefs about language and education. These beliefs are closely tied to the participants’ personal values, the socio-cultural context in which they live and work, and their own learning and teaching experiences. Therefore, Chapter Four will also address the research question, ‘What is the role of the influences that shape personal practical theories?’ Chapter Five will consider the participants’ classroom practices in light of their espoused beliefs about their teaching practices, and will be based on classroom observations as well as both the e-mail and in-person interviews. It will answer the research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’ Chapter Six will provide summaries of the personal practical theories and of the answers to the research questions. It will also draw implications from this study.

The themes that Chapter Four will cover are:

- Reasons for Becoming a Language Teacher;
- Beliefs about Language;
- Beliefs about Education;
- Beliefs about the Participants’ Language and Language Teaching Education.

Because the participants’ expressed these beliefs to me in light of their assumptions about my understanding of Armenia and their own personal and professional situations, I will provide background information in order to contextualize their beliefs. For example, the
participants were aware of my familiarity with the school system in Armenia; without background information on Soviet language policy and its impact on the school curriculum, the participants’ comments on ‘Russian’, ‘Armenian’, and ‘language specialized’ schools are meaningless. This is particularly important as some of the beliefs and practices of these teachers are specific responses to their socio-cultural situation.

As will be seen, these six teachers came to value and develop their own personal practical theories that allowed them to tailor individual responses to particular classes. In doing this, new sources of information informed their teaching.

Reasons for Becoming an EFL Teacher

The stated reasons of the participants for becoming EFL teachers are varied. Several categories emerged from the analysis of the data: the influence of learning experiences; the influence of the environment, including demand for teachers and early teaching experiences; the influence of parents; and the desire to share knowledge of English. Several of the participants described themselves as not having originally planned to teach EFL when they began their tertiary studies, but having decided to do so under one or more of these influences. These influences have played a role in the personal practical theories of the participants, and thus are part of the answer to the second research question.

Several of the participants report on the influence of their own English teachers and language learning experiences in their career choices as well as their teaching styles, much as Lortie (1975) discusses. One of the strongest influences in at least one case seems to have been the role played by the participant’s own English teacher. Nune was very strongly influenced by her secondary school English teacher, who appears to be the determining and possibly the sole factor in Nune’s decision.

My generation selected English as an inner voice, not taking into account the demand and the supply, especially me. I chose this way having a brilliant model of a teacher, [named], my English teacher at school, who opened the beauties of this language for me and I firmly decided to go through this path (I5Q2). (See Appendix B for data reference conventions.)

Nune explicitly stated that she wanted to be like this teacher in order ‘to awaken the beauty of the language to my pupils, make them love the language’ (I1Q3). She not only attended the same institute (Premier Institute) where her own teacher had graduated, but then went on to
teach at the same school which she had attended as a student because ‘I wanted to carry on those good traditions existing in our school connected with English’ (I1Q1).

Irina also attributes her decision to teach English to the influence of a teacher, although other factors also contributed to her decision. In her case, one of her New University professors encouraged her because ‘she thought I had all the qualities for becoming a teacher’ (I6Q1). ‘She said, ‘You have knowledge, you have ability, so you can be a teacher” (OIp6). Other factors also contributed to her decision, however. During her undergraduate practicum course, Irina discovered that her students had a powerful effect on her.

They were so attentive to what I said and ready to learn that their interest transferred to me. I became very interested in teaching, I mean I wanted to do everything in order that my students not lose their interest. I wanted them to make more and more progress. That was my first teaching experience and I think that was the key for me to choose TEFL as a career (I1Q4).

Irina also attributes her decision to having attended the TEFL Certificate programme. This is more significant than it may sound in that Irina enrolled in the TEFL programme under the mistaken assumption that its purpose was to improve English language skills. Indeed, this misunderstanding had a deleterious effect: ‘To tell the truth I did not like the [Western University] programme as I did not have a clear idea of the program objectives as the information I got about it was not enough’ (I4Q1). Eventually, however, ‘the objectives became clear to me’ (I4Q1). These two latter influences—the effect of her students and the effect of the TEFL programme—can be categorized as environmental influences. Several other participants also discussed the influence of their early teaching experiences, in part particularly the idea of sharing knowledge with students, as well as the influence of their TEFL Certificate programme. For some of these participants, these influences trumped earlier career choices.

In Lusine’s case, she was invited to fill in for an ill teacher who was supposed to have been her mentor for her practicum course at her former secondary school, located in the provinces. At the time Lusine was still studying at Capital University. Her own words offer insight into both her own situation and that of Armenia in the early 1990s:

Then in the winter [in the capital] we had no classes since there was no heating [at the University], and I spent the long winter at home [in the provinces] and decided to take up teaching, for my school director said there were not enough English teachers at the moment to teach all the classes (I1Q1).….I’d never thought of becoming a teacher. There was a time I even detested it a lot as a career….After graduation [from the University] I thought that the best career for me would be in translation and interpretation (I1Q4).
But Lusine discovered that she did not enjoy her job as an interpreter, and returned to teaching, again in her hometown,

since that was the only other alternative for a job, since with my educational background that was the only other choice I felt prepared for. At least I thought I knew the language, and would be able to share my knowledge successfully with some other people. That’s when I fell in love with teaching (I1Q4).

Thus Lusine found that her own lack of options coincided with demand, leading to her discovery that she actually enjoyed the very career she had once thought she would detest.

Zara’s case, although different in the details, is similar in the overall pattern. Her original career choice to be a translator was superseded by her own experiences.

Frankly speaking, my initial purpose was to become a translator. At the beginning of the 1990’s there was a great demand in translators and it was a more or less well-paid job in the country. Everybody wanted to become a translator. Most of my classmates did. Very few of them teach English now (I4Q2).

Nonetheless Zara decided to try teaching:

I decided to become a teacher because I liked teaching as a child and it later came out that English was my most favourite subject. Now, when I go back in my memories and try to think of something else, I feel there was not anything else that I could choose but the profession of a teacher and mainly an English teacher (I6Q1).

These feelings about English and English teaching were reinforced when, after three years of teaching at the Institute from which she had graduated, Zara entered the TEFL Certificate programme.

When I graduated from [the Provincial Institute] I wasn’t sure, am I going to be teaching or not, because I was not so confident of my knowledge. But after graduating [from Western University], I knew that I liked teaching, I wanted to teach. I wanted to share the knowledge that I had with other people (Oltp17).

Hasmik also originally planned to become a translator or interpreter, but found that her training led her to like the idea of teaching, and that her teaching experiences led her to like it even more.

To tell the truth, I have never dreamt of becoming a teacher. I wanted to know English well and become a translator or interpreter. However, when I entered [the Premier Institute] I began to like this profession. I liked the teacher’s job even more when I began teaching and I saw that my students liked and trusted me (I6Q1).

It should be noted that Hasmik’s first teaching experiences were in her practicum courses.
Varsenik quite simply wrote that ‘it was not my dream. I have never wanted to teach. It was by accident’ (I1Q4). Interestingly, it was Varsenik who, with Irina, opened a language school.

Several of the participants specifically mentioned the role of their parents, although this may have more to do with learning language than teaching language. Lusine brought up this subject most explicitly, writing that her father ‘chose’ for her to study EFL, attributing his choice—just as Armenia was beginning to take the steps that led to independence—to foresight (I5Q2). Nune mentioned that her mother thought a foreign language was necessary; both Zara and Hasmik also mentioned that their mothers chose for them to attend schools where they could study English. And virtually all of the participants mention, in one context or another, growing up in families where language and learning were prized.

Finally, it is interesting that the three most experienced teachers—Nune, Lusine, and Zara—all mention that sharing their knowledge of English was one of the reasons they decided to teach. This is closely connected to a theme that will be discussed in Chapter Five, the participants’ beliefs about the aims of teaching. This suggests that the participants’ beliefs about their own aims as individuals are related to their aims as teachers. This is one example of how personal experience influences personal practical theories.

In summary, although only one of the participants began her tertiary studies with the intention of becoming a teacher, most of them discovered that teaching appealed to them through either their learning or early teaching experiences.

Beliefs about language and education will be considered next.

**Beliefs about Language**

As suggested in the previous section, the participants had varied reasons for becoming EFL teachers. However, they all share a very positive attitude toward language in general, and the English language in particular. This positive attitude is closely linked to the participants’ beliefs about the role of language in Armenia, and is linked to the participants’ classroom practices. The participants believe that their exposure to multiple languages has strengthened their interest and lessened, if not eliminated, their anxiety about learning language, and they believe that this should be true for their students as well. Such beliefs about language are one
of the influences on the participants’ personal practical theories. Therefore this section is part of the response to the second research question on the role of influences on personal practical theories. It also provides background information about the socio-cultural context in which the participants’ experiences, beliefs, and practices are embedded, and thus is necessary to understanding those experiences, beliefs, and practices. This section is based on the categories (given in order of their emergence from the e-mail and in-person interview data): professional development activities, why the participant learned English, how the participant learned English, teaching materials, Russian/Soviet pedagogy, generational differences, why students study English, student expectations, classroom behaviour, and ‘the Armenian mentality’.

**Historical Context of Languages in Armenia**

All Armenian children learn that in the 5th century AD, Mesrop Mashtots invented the Armenian alphabet. The Armenian language has survived for thousands of years, through multiple invasions, numerous waves of immigration, and Turkey’s attempted genocide for which the term was originally coined. It is a source of pride and a symbol of the struggles of the Armenian people to maintain their culture.

However, Armenians are not completely ethnocentric in their love of their language. As an ‘immigrant-exporting nation’ for thousands of years, most Armenians have grown up knowing of relatives and friends in other lands, Armenians who have Armenian for their first language—although perhaps the Western version—but also second and third languages; or who have a different first language with Armenian as their heritage language. As one of the participants pointed out, knowing that you have relatives and friends abroad draws you to another culture, another language. Furthermore, for thousands of years Armenia has been a crossroads, in particular for trade and military forces, such that many Armenians have learned the languages of their neighbours. Some Armenians know some Georgian, especially if they are near the border or are related to members of Georgia’s sizable Armenian minority. Many Armenian words are actually Persian in origin, and Persian is a popular choice for foreign language study. And despite the enmity that exists between Armenia and Turkey, many Armenians know some Turkish. Most important, of course, is the fact that everyone who attended school while...
Armenia was a Republic of the Soviet Union learned Russian, resulting in a population that was largely bilingual until the most recent generation.

The participants themselves recognize the role multi-lingualism has played in their own lives. Growing up in the Soviet Union, these teachers were all exposed to both Russian and Armenian on a daily basis since their births. They were also schooled in both languages since their early years. The Soviet Union early on recognized the importance of language to ethnic and cultural identity, and used language policy to achieve political ends (Smith, 1998).

Language policy underwent several major changes in the Soviet Union. In the early years under Lenin there was an emphasis on ‘indigenisation’ to instil ethnic consciousness through language; by encouraging local languages (for example by developing alphabets for oral languages and by supporting education in local languages), it was hoped that different ethnic groups would support the Soviet Union (Goldenberg, 1994; Smith 1998). This policy changed dramatically under Stalin, when ‘Russification’ campaigns imposed Russian on most of the non-Russian republics. Armenia avoided forced Russification, however, at least in part because of the homogeneity of its population (Shnirelman, 2001) and the Soviet (i.e., Russian) perception that it was a ‘Western’ or ‘European’ people and language (Smith, 1998). Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, language policy again reversed directions, returning to an emphasis on ‘cultural renewal’ that ultimately led to Armenian (along with the other two major Transcaucasian languages, Georgian and Azerbaijani) being declared official State languages in 1978 (Goldenberg, 1994). At the same time, however, the amount of required class time for Russian increased (Wright, 2000). Thus for the participants of this study, although the Armenian language was officially recognized, the Russian language was required. This led to a dual school system in Armenia, with Russian schools, in which all subjects were taught in Russian, and Armenian language and literature taught as one of the required subjects; and Armenian schools, in which all subjects were taught in Armenian, and Russian language and literature taught as one of the required subjects. In general, Russian schools were regarded as superior; two participants who attended Russian schools, Irina and Hasmik, noted this.

Within the dual school system there were ‘specialized’ schools. There were foreign language specialized schools (just as there were math and science specialized schools, arts specialized schools, and so on); these schools offered more hours of foreign language than in
regular schools. According to several of the participants, and also described by Monk (1990) and Pavlenko (2003), an English specialized school would offer 9 hours of English a week beginning in the third year of school, compared to the usual 2 hours a week beginning in the fourth year of school. I also observed such differences between teaching hours while doing practicum observations. Although English specialized schools were usually Russian schools, this was not always the case. Zara went to an English specialized school that was an Armenian school.

Thus all of the participants in this study are bilingual, if not multilingual. And while most Armenians do not go on to become linguists and language teachers, the participants in this study found associations between their early exposure to multiple languages and their own professional interests. The participants’ descriptions of their language backgrounds and their beliefs about influences on it, as well as the influences on their students, will be presented next.

**Influence of Multilingual Environment on Participants**

The participants of this study believe that the multilingual environment in which they grew up fostered a love of language that positively affected their interest in foreign languages and, as mentioned above, their interest in sharing knowledge of it with students.

Zara believes the multilingual environment influenced her. Educated at an Armenian school, she wrote, ‘I have always liked languages. At first it was Russian and then my love for English took over’ (I6Q2). This predilection began early: ‘I had Russian in kindergarten….we had Russian in Grade 1, and we had English in Grade 2, which means that I had both Russian and English together’ (OlP22). However, the shift in her emotional focus on a language, from Russian to English, came later: ‘I have become interested in English since I was in Grade 9 and my formal learning was accompanied by my own reading and inquisitiveness’ (I6Q2). This led her to choose a double language major, Russian and English, for her studies at the Provincial Institute. Armenian, however, ‘is my mother tongue…Armenian is like something which is very dear to you’ (OlP23). Nonetheless, because she was a Russian major, she often speaks Russian where she might speak Armenian; for example, she speaks Russian with her former classmates (most of whom attended Russian language schools.)
Irina attended Russian language schools, but did not choose to study it at the tertiary level. She was also a dual major, but in Classical and Germanic/Romance languages: ‘We had two majors [at the New University]. The first was English, the second was Latin’ (Oltp4). She has also recently begun French lessons. Her first languages, of course, are Armenian and Russian. ‘I can speak Armenian equally well, but I prefer Russian. For example when I read something I like to read in Russian…I like Armenian too, but it's easier for me to read in Russian….We used Russian at home too, but mainly we used Armenian’ (Oltp7-8). Thus, although Russian is the language she knows best, in part because she went to a Russian language school, Armenian nonetheless remains the language for communicating with family.

The oldest of the participants, Nune was more thoroughly exposed to the Soviet system. Her situation may illustrate the difference between the amount and quality of the language preparation of regular schools as compared to language specialized schools (which Nune literally translates as ‘language inclined’ schools, but which may possibly suggest other reasons for the situation she describes).

I wasn’t from an English inclined school…English was taught only twice a week from the fourth grade….I tried to enlarge my knowledge and have equal opportunity with students who come from inclined schools because they had it everyday…even [their] class was just in English (Oltp9).

Nune had to take the English language entrance exams for the Premier Institute a second and third time because she missed the cut-off score, which changed annually as a means of limiting the number of students. Retaking the exam was discouraged by requiring aspirants to spend at least six months of the year working in a factory for every time the exam was to be retaken. Thus Nune worked in a lighting fixture factory for two years before she was able to begin her undergraduate studies. She attributed her insufficient score to the fact that most of her competitors had more than twice as much English language instruction, in particular on grammar, the focus of the examination. Once at the Premier Institute, she not only studied English, but also French.

Lusine uses English not only as a teacher, but also at her full-time job working in a grassroots Western educational aid programme. Like most of the other participants, she is equally fluent in Russian and Armenian. She notes that she tends to speak Russian for official business, English for work, and Armenian with family and friends.
Hasmik attended Russian school, but did not seriously begin her study of English until high school, when ‘I decided to take up something that was close to my heart. I decided on English, even though it was not so popular in those days as it is today’ (I1Q4). Her love of English led to her decision to study at Premier Institute. She considers herself bilingual in Russian and Armenian.

Varsenik is also equally fluent in Russian and Armenian. As a child, she began her language studies in French, but when she changed schools she also changed her foreign language to English. ‘I enjoyed learning English very much. I enjoyed that I would be able to read Shakespeare in the original’ (I6Q1). She pointed out that like most people from the provinces, she code switches between the Armenian spoken in the capital and the dialect spoken in her province, as do even the very youngest members of her extended family who are just beginning to simultaneously learn three languages—and three dialects within one of them.

This was also mentioned by some of the other students from the provinces. Zara, for example, said, ‘I have to talk my [provincial] dialect because these are people who are very dear to me’ (Olp23), suggesting that the local dialect was closest to the heart; then what the participants term the standard version of Armenian; and then either Russian or English.

Irina also made another interesting point about multilingualism. While discussing what she had learned in her TEFL programme, Irina made of point of mentioning that she had been completely unaware of the idea of language learning anxiety:

…actually I didn’t realize that someone can feel it while learning a language. Because we are, I am, bilingual, and so I didn’t realize that way. I can say that when you’re bilingual you feel maybe a difference, a little different, because you have got two languages and you don’t even think there are some emotional aspects of that (Olp5).

While some participants discussed students who felt anxiety, such discussions focused on grades or unfamiliar methods being used in the classroom. Several also discussed the desire of students to speak ‘perfect’ English; however, this did not come up in the context of anxiety, but in the context of the strong beliefs most students have about the importance of learning grammar. So among these participants there seems to be a general belief that exposure to multiple languages lessens—if not eliminates—language learning anxiety. In their own cases, they believe it fostered a positive outlook towards foreign languages.
Attitudes about the Spread of English

Although most of the participants were motivated to learn English for intrinsic reasons, they believe that most of their students are extrinsically motivated. All of the participants attributed this interest to the need for employment. However, several participants connected the increased interest in English with the larger political, economic, and social realities of post-Soviet Armenia. Thus the participants link the general shift in attitudes towards English to the spread of English arising out of the specific context of post-Soviet Armenia. Furthermore, their attitudes as well as their perception of their students’ attitudes have affected their classroom practices. Although this effect will be discussed in Chapter Five, this section provides not only the espoused beliefs of the participants, but also the background information necessary for contextualizing those beliefs.

While all of the participants mentioned the status of English as an international language, often explicitly mentioning its importance for research as well as general information (Armenia’s physical and cultural isolation in the early and mid-90s cannot be overestimated), they all stated that employment was the primary motivation of students studying English. The economic changes Armenia suffered as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union, exacerbated by her involvement in a war with neighbouring Azerbaijan that led to the blockading of most of her borders, meant that everyone seized any chance to improve their rapidly deteriorating lot. English was one of those chances.

The focus on English as a means to a better future encompasses school-age students as well as adults. Nune described her school students as being both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated.

Nowadays some students simply love the language or are simply interested to see what it is like. They may have a practical reason for their study: they want to learn English so they can watch American films, work with foreigners, and for this they use every chance to master the language. Some of them have a chance to continue their education in different programmes, even to be integrated into the culture of its speakers. Others are informed that if they know the language they will get a better-paid job…. (I1C)

Although Nune mentioned intrinsic motivation, she focused—as she believed her students did—on a lengthy list of extrinsic motivations.
Irina began her response by mentioning the desire to communicate with relatives living abroad, but continued by focusing on students who studied English in order to have better opportunities for tertiary education and work:

I mean opportunities to study in [the] best universities, opportunities to work in International Organizations…. EFL is really necessary to study abroad, and many individuals in Armenia are students in foreign countries…. You cannot have a well-paid job in Armenia unless you know English (I5Q2).

Lusine mentioned the practical advantages offered by the English language, and suggested a pecuniary advantage in being able to communicate with diaspora Armenians.

Perhaps the only generalization about motivations to study English would be the practical advantages that come with knowing this language…. In Armenia the role of EFL cannot be overestimated. Seems like every single person here wants to know English today…. It’s believed to be very prestigious if, for instance, the daughter studies in an English department. Parents pay a lot of money to send their kids to private classes or to various English courses…. First, knowledge of English can guarantee a better job; second, the diaspora is very active and getting even more so. A lot of people have relatives in English-speaking countries and, unfortunately not finding a job here, they tend to leave Armenia and look for jobs outside the country where their relatives are; third a lot of young people learn English for there are many opportunities to study abroad… (I5Q2).

Varsenik, who teaches those prestigious daughters (and one son) in the English department of Premier Institute, deplored the fact that her university students were extremely grade-focused. However, she felt that she had made a little progress in shifting their attitudes by reminding her students that grades alone were not enough; potential employers expected them to be able to use English, too, thus refocusing her students’ attention on the practical value of learning English. Zara felt that English was becoming increasingly dominant in Armenia, and that perhaps over 50% of the population had some facility in it. (It is unlikely that the figure is this high for the country as a whole, although within the central area of the capitol it may be approaching that.) She too attributed this level of interest in English to interest in, first, getting jobs; then studying and living abroad; reading specialized literature; communicating with foreigners; and finally, developing self-confidence. Hasmik also mentioned the importance of English for scientific literature, as well as its being fashionable (discussed in more detail just below), but emphasized the fact that ‘English is a must in many jobs’ (I5Q2).

It is only in the past few years, however, that English has been viewed in this light. The participants themselves, who began their studies as school children in the 60s and 70s, felt that theirs had not been a popular choice for tertiary study in the 80s or early 90s, as several
mention in the section above, Beliefs about Language, and as others in the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc also report (Pavlenko, 2003). The relatively sudden and widespread interest in English concomitant with the independence of Armenia, and in particular the popular perception that knowledge of English acts as a ‘gatekeeper to positions of prestige’ (Pennycook, 1985, p.40), will therefore be discussed next in the context of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992).

**Linguistic imperialism in Armenia: Russian or English?**

As the popularity of Russian waned with the collapse of the Soviet Union, so the popularity of English waxed with an influx of members of the Armenian diaspora community, International Organizations and, in particular, Western (mostly American) aid. It should be noted that the economic assistance Armenia receives is funnelled not only through Western government agencies, but also through private diaspora organizations and individual investors and donors. Indeed, what economic assistance Armenia does receive from the U.S. government has been mostly due to Congressional influence from the Armenian-American diaspora community (Masih and Krikorian, 1999). (Other large Armenian diaspora communities are centered in Canada, France, Syria, and Lebanon.) In recent years, this level of financial assistance has been a source of contention within some political circles that see few advantages accruing to such extensive U.S. support of Armenia in light of the potential value of oil in neighbouring Azerbaijan (Hunter, 1994). The issue of linguistic imperialism, therefore, must be viewed through these geopolitical complications, as well as the role of the Armenian diaspora.

Language becomes imperialistic through linguicism. Phillipson, after Skutnabb-Kangas (1988), defines this process as ‘ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language’ (1992, p. 47). The participants of this study regard Russian in this light to at least some extent, despite the relatively benign treatment of Armenian during the several language policy shifts described above. Irina, for example, explicitly described Russian language schools as superior to Armenian language schools, and Hasmik described them as being more prestigious. I have heard other Armenians say this as well. Several of the participants mentioned that their
pedagogical courses focused on Russian theorists rather than Armenian theorists, with Zara explicitly writing about it. Although Phillipson offers the Soviet Union as something of a model in that ‘many languages were cultivated or maintained to the point where they can serve all essential societal purposes’ (1992, p. 307), he also (somewhat grudgingly) allows that there has been a ‘linguist favouring of Russian in many domains’ (1992, p. 107). The only two domains he cites are scientific research and the army; as the participants of this study and my own observations indicate, people living within Armenia had—and still have—a much wider sense of Russian linguicism, ranging as it did from Russian language street signs and television broadcasts to Russian published textbooks. In fact, in the 80s,

Within Soviet Armenia small dissident groups had begun to emerge...some focused on cultural concerns, protesting at the spread of the Russian language... (Goldenberg, 1994, p. 139).

It has been reported that even school children took part in anti-Soviet protests in 1989 by reciting the Armenian alphabet (Shnirelman, 2001). Zara, who attended Armenian schools, remembered her own formal introduction into Russian language and culture in kindergarten with ‘a teacher who came to tell us Russian traditions’ (Zara, Olp22). And even though Armenia had avoided forced Russification, Russian was widely perceived to be the language of success. This was true within the participants' lifetimes, especially their school years beginning under Brezhnev and continuing under Gorbachev, when

...it was Russian, a major world language that was slavishly and vigorously being promoted by the state. The view that national culture and national language need not necessarily coincide, that Russian alone can fulfill most cultural needs continued to gain ground. Giving up one’s language and shifting to Russian was deemed ‘progressive’, ‘mature’, ‘according to the laws of natural development’. (Kreindler, 1989, p. 56, cited in Wright, 2000, p. 2).

The issue then, is whether these six participants offer evidence that Russian linguicism is being replaced by English linguicism.

Hasmik, for example, wrote that ‘English has become fashionable in recent years. The same thing happened to Russian in the times of the Soviet Union’ (OI5Q2). This remark, embedded as it is in a passage that also described the importance of English for jobs and research, could possibly be interpreted as an indicator of just how insidious the spread of English is. The imposition of Russian was done so openly, by proclamation and even law, and, at least according to Phillipson, without falling victim to ‘the subtractive fallacy’ (1992, p. 185) in
which education in and the use of the local language is deemed to have a negative impact on
acquisition of the target language. The spread of English, however, has seemingly occurred
without notice and thus without sanction (in either sense of the word). Zara, for example, felt
that the shift from Russian to English had not been noticed.

There was a time when Russian was the dominant language in Armenia. Those times
are in the past, and nowadays there are fewer and fewer Russian-speaking Armenians
who consider Russian to be their first language. English is becoming more and more
dominant….This transition from Russian into English was very fluent and sort of
unnoticed…. (I5Q2).

The gradual, unnoticed, unchecked spread of English is rather different than the more
formalized spread of Russian within Soviet Armenia. It is also rather different from many of the
well-documented examples of the spread of English in the colonial and post-colonial British
Empire (which possibly have more in common with the spread of Russian). However, some of
the same mechanisms of linguistic imperialism that have been described in the former British
colonies and elsewhere are also at work in the spread of English in Armenia. These
mechanisms are ones that Phillipson claims are used to impart ‘the myth of non-political ELT’
(1992, p. 165). These involve the reproduction of structural, pedagogical, and cultural
inequalities. Because structures and pedagogy are themselves means for conveying culture,
cultural inequalities will be considered alongside structural and pedagogical inequalities. All
three convey values, and so values will also be considered.

Structural and cultural inequalities and values

This section provides background information on the role English plays in the economic
and political life of Armenia, and whether this has led to the inequalities that Phillipson claims
are the result of linguistic imperialism (1992). It provides a context for the beliefs that the
participants attribute to their students’ motivation for studying English, and their own career
choices. It also shows the non-classroom roles that are available to English language teachers
in Armenia. Although it does not directly relate to the personal practical theories of the
participants, this section does provide background information on the sociocultural context in
which the participants live and work.

The reproduction of structural (e.g. economic and political) and cultural inequalities
through language suggests that English may play such a role in Armenia. For years Russian
speakers were the beneficiaries of structural inequalities in the Soviet Union (for example, tertiary education was in Russian); today, in post-Soviet Armenia, English speakers can be perceived to be the beneficiaries. Pavlenko describes how people in other countries previously under Soviet influence ‘who previously did not see the relevance of English—or any other foreign language—are now reconsidering their attitudes and reimagining themselves as sophisticated multilinguals’ (2003, p.328). The post-independence flood of International Organizations (IOs) into Armenia, many of which operate in English (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996), is in large part responsible for the increased interest in English. This flood of English-speaking IOs is also tied to the perception that English is somehow necessary to a good job, a view that appears validated all too often. For example, the seemingly incidental championing of one language over another through employment practices has resulted in the spread of English through native English speaker IO employees who rely upon English-speaking local employees for interacting with the local population. Such employment is highly sought after since it is far better paid than most locally-generated jobs and sometimes offers opportunities for study and even more lucrative work abroad. Several of the participants of this study have been so employed. For example, Lusine worked as a translator for a UN agency before she turned to teaching, and she currently works in a grassroots American educational organization (partially funded by U.S. government grant money). Its locally hired staff members all speak English. Zara is another example. She translates for an institution funded by both a private Armenian diaspora organization and the U.S. government. Everyone on its staff speaks English. Nune is a third example; she offers educational seminars under the aegis of an American government funded agency.

Do any of these examples support a claim that the organizations involved perpetuate structural or cultural inequalities? The educational aid organization that Lusine currently works for has a number of different projects. One is hosting internet exchanges, in English, between groups of students and teachers in other countries and Armenian students and teachers. Another is establishing dialogues, in Armenian, between groups of Armenian school administrators and teachers on a variety of topics; I was invited to one on women’s issues where one of the topics discussed was the change being wrought by Western (read: American) pop culture on traditional Armenian values and how it affected the self-image of young
Armenian women. Another project is to establish ‘connectivity’ in schools and communities in rural Armenia by donating the hardware and initial technical support and training for school-based internet cafes. The schools use the computers for educational purposes during the day; the computers are then used for a self-sustaining internet café open to the public in the evening with any profits generated to be used by the school (personal communication with Lusine and the organization director). The first project (whose English language website I have read; it is also available in Armenian) struck me as a modern version of school pen-pal programmes, and just as innocuous, too. The second programme struck me as explicitly addressing cross-cultural conflict from the local perspective. The third struck me as exactly the sort of small scale, locally controlled, ultimately self-sustaining aid project that empowers rather than diminishes people in need of economic assistance. In other words, none of the projects themselves seemed to bear out the initial sense that Anglo-linguicism was at work just because the organization itself hired English speaking Armenians to interact with its native English speaker director and donor-country support staff. Nor did there seem to be a hidden agenda to impart non-Armenian values; on the contrary, two of the projects seemed to be focused on promoting Armenian values against American cultural hegemony. In other words, the projects seemed to be facilitating rather than restricting the production of meanings (Pennycook, 1995).

The case of diaspora-funded institutions (which would include Western University, where the participants received their TEFL education) is much thornier. The Armenian-American diaspora played a major role in arranging U.S. government assistance as well as making its own donations to Armenia after the earthquake of 1988. Humanitarian assistance was further increased after independence, again partly through the efforts of the Armenian-American diaspora, when the Armenian government declared Armenia a ‘disaster zone’ (Masih and Krikorian, 1999, p. 71-72). Several diaspora communities (not only Americans) also played a powerful role in democratizing the institutions of Armenia; in fact, many members of the first post-Soviet government hailed from diaspora communities (Goldenberg, 1994). Thus besides personal agendas, diaspora Armenians often have overt political agendas.

There is no doubt that Western University, where the participants received their TEFL Certificate education, has a political and cultural agenda of helping Armenia develop democratic-style institutions and free markets. It has openly expressed this role and is widely
understood in that light. The University was established ‘to train Armenians for the free market’ (Goldenberg, 1994, p. 146). Its stated mission and programmes match, to a startling degree, those Phillipson cites as being the goals of U.S. foundations seeking to establish universities in other areas of strategic and economic interest (1992, p. 161). The spread of English and Anglo-American English language teaching through the TEFL Certificate programme, from which all of the participants in this study graduated, is but one example. However, the opening of two other Western-sponsored universities (one being Graduate University, where Lusine works), neither associated with English-speaking countries, is offering Western University competition (although none offer English language teaching programmes). Nonetheless, it is one example of the large and agenda-dominated role that the diaspora, and the American diaspora in particular, has come to play in Armenia, and it is possible that with it comes a certain degree of Anglo-linguicism.

What is less obvious is whether this role is hegemonistic or not. American interest in Armenia is constantly threatened by its other interests in the region, in particular oil in Azerbaijan; the American diaspora sees part of its role as ensuring that Americans continue to keep Armenia in mind, and in particular continue to provide the humanitarian assistance Armenia still so badly needs (Goldenberg, 1994). On the one hand, the fact that so much of the agenda is in the hands of Armenians, albeit diaspora Armenians, gives the agenda a kind of semi-insider perspective lacking in some of the examples that Phillipson (1992) cites. On the other hand, and perhaps even more important, is the fact that Armenians in the former Soviet Armenia and diaspora Armenians do not always see eye to eye. Armenians in Armenia often feel that diaspora Armenians have ‘lost touch with the realities of life in Soviet Armenia’ (Masih and Krikorian, 1999), which in large part depend on the geo-political realities of relations with its neighbours.

In other words, Armenians in Armenia are not naïve, uncritical, or passive recipients of aid, influence, and the strings that come with them. On the contrary; they have years of experience of real-politik within the Soviet Union. Perhaps most importantly, the diaspora and Armenia differ on the role of Russia. A real-politik view is that ‘because of its proximity, past links, and military presence, Russia will be the most important external influence’ on Armenia (Hunter, 1994, p. 186). Indeed, ‘Russophilia’ in Armenia predates the Soviet Union
Such a historically validated strategic relationship is hardly a recipe for Anglo-linguistic imperialism. Irina’s own Russophilia (mentioned above) is a very small but very concrete example.

_Pedagogical and cultural inequalities and values_

This section will consider pedagogical and cultural inequalities. It will look at the participants’ views about English language teaching in Armenia and how it has had an impact on pedagogical and cultural practices, while comparing them with their views about Russian. It will conclude by considering the role of language and national identity, a theme which re-emerges in the discussion of language teaching aims in Chapter Five. The themes discussed in this section are examples of how the socio-cultural context influences personal practical theories.

Linguistic imperialism can be felt in other ways than economically and politically. Linguicism can also perpetuate inequalities through language pedagogy, or even threaten indigenous languages, ‘if priority is given in teacher training, curriculum development, and school timetables, to one language’ (Phillipson (1992) p. 47). Certainly the participants attest to the growing interest in English, and schools—both state-run and private—have tried to meet this interest. The TEFL programme at Western University is, however, the only Western-sponsored programme of its kind in Armenia, and the handful of Certificates it graduates each year (5-15 annually since the early 1990s) and MA’s (5 at the inception of this study in 2003) does not begin to compare with the numbers graduated by the Premier Institute alone, much less any of the other Armenian universities and institutes graduating pedagogically-trained English majors. Furthermore, the desire for pedagogical change to some extent comes from recognition within Armenia that current practices are not meeting student expectations, as a local survey revealed (Antonian and Davis, 2002). In fact, Western notice of the Soviet originators of sociocultural theory has prompted, at least within Armenia, a call ‘to develop them locally as applications of a longstanding tradition of sociocultural theory, rather than to import them piecemeal as ‘techniques’ employed in the West’ (Antonian and Davis, 2002). Here, then, is a concrete example of the critical perspective Armenians take with regard to some Western imports (or in
this case, re-imports). Nor is there any question of English replacing Armenian as the language of education, much less in daily or even official life.

Other Western influences on education also exist. One grassroots educational aid programme has been described above. The U.S. government officially sponsors programmes as well. Nune has received funds and equipment on behalf of her school by conducting English teaching seminars and teacher training organized and financed by a U.S. government sponsored organization. However, the seminars Nune has conducted have been selected and planned by Nune herself, and express her own interests. She is a proponent, for example, of Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory, and has used that as the basis for seminars. Her interest in and use of this theory in her seminars does not appear to be related to either her TEFL Certificate courses or to any training provided by the sponsoring organization. Rather, it is based on Nune’s own experiences which have led to her to find ways to ensure that disadvantaged students, in particular those whose parents are visually handicapped, have the same educational opportunities as the less disadvantaged.

So there are students that are clever and students that are stupid because their parents and family members are not helping them a lot because they live in poor conditions and they have no opportunity even to buy a book. And how can they for example hire a specialist to educate their sons and pay applying for the institute? But you know this [is the] most commonly used opinion for many years, especially the district where I work [which is a] poor district. And some of the parents are blind because here besides our school there is the school for the short-sighted….. I didn’t share their opinion because I was from that school and my parents weren’t blind and I’m not blind…. Anyhow the main evidence seems untrue, [as] many children from those families became students, became good specialists…. But I didn’t have any facts under my hand…. And so this Gardner’s theory…I investigated some books…I showed [other teachers] and asked them to read some sections. And even I think that even during this short period of the lesson the teacher can achieve something…. So the teachers come to the same opinion. Of course [the teachers’] achievements are little, but still their opinions are broken, have cracked (Ol p.16-17).

This is a teacher using her own experience to use ‘outsider’ information in a way appropriate to local conditions. Nune has worked slowly and carefully to gradually convince other teachers to change their opinions.

I can’t blame all those teachers who don’t want to listen to me even if I say, ‘take this and read it if you have time. It has already been made, these copies.’ I just pay money for these copies…. But anyhow I did it because if a teacher comes the second time to these [seminars], we will have something. And it is already progress, a step forward. And I’m just very quiet for the third time, the fourth time. He or she will find me. She will find my phone number and phone me up and say, ‘Bring tomorrow something for me.’ And maybe this is a recovery of the school system too. Every school like this school has inner energy, looking forward, and all these schools are just buds of the education system. So education will be alive (Ol p17).
Nune is taking a grassroots approach to change from the inside. She herself is an insider, and in this passage she shows her sensitivity to local conditions and the means by which to elicit interest, and eventually support, for new ways of educating students. Nor is Nune's priority here in promoting one language at the expense of others; rather, she is using her language teaching knowledge and experience as a means of promoting broader educational aims in ways that are consistent with community values. The goal is not to perpetuate inequalities, but quite the opposite: to promote equality of opportunity for the disadvantaged.

Another means by which linguicism is promoted, according to Phillipson (1992), is through commercial publishing. Textbooks 'export' both pedagogy and values. In the case of Armenia, both Russian and Western textbooks can be perceived in this light. After independence, in the early 90s Armenia embarked on textbook reform in order to replace Russian language textbooks published in the Soviet Union with Armenian language textbooks published in Britain or Armenia. The new textbooks are also methodologically different: 'It seems the authors have tried to design a more communicative textbook' (Lusine I1C). Nune, for example, wrote that 'the [old] books came from Moscow and the interests and national peculiarities were not taken into consideration' (I1Q5). She elaborated by writing,

They were meant for Russian pupils particularly. Besides, only Russian names are mentioned in dialogues..., no national holiday is mentioned..., the way they live, the place they live, and the grammar is compared with Russian, let alone pronunciation comparison (I1C).

(It should be noted that some older textbooks were in Armenian, 'but did not differ much from those published in Russian for Russian schools...the major difference being the instructions in Armenian instead of Russian and some Armenian names....' (Lusine, I1C).) Thus Russian textbooks were perceived as promoting Russian linguicism even as they taught English. Today English language textbooks are now locally published; Nune described them as 'very good textbooks' (I1C). Lusine wrote, 'Today the textbooks we have I believe try to incorporate more of the Armenian reality into the content' (I1C0. This is true even though the textbooks are published by Western companies, as Lusine pointed out: 'Instead of the previous heavily British-culture-oriented content, today there are reading passages, e.g., about Yerevan and Armenia' (I1C). However, both Nune and Lusine felt that they are not always used appropriately because
they come without teacher’s guides to explain how to use activities based on methods (such as pre-reading activities) that are unfamiliar to many teachers.

Locally published books are published by a major western publisher in a joint venture with an Armenian publisher. These locally published books must still compete with non-locally published commercial textbooks. Both private language schools and state schools use these books. Zara, for example, is required to use a major Western commercial series in her teaching. Lusine selected a Western business case studies textbook to use in her Graduate University classes of business students. Varsenik, like many other teachers at Premier Institute, supplements the required Armenian textbook series with a Western textbook series. She uses Western textbooks in her private tutoring as well. And when she ran her own educational centre, I observed that the centre exclusively used Western textbooks. I also observed this in several other private language schools. It is only in the state school system that I have observed that Armenian published textbooks are extensively used because they are prescribed. (Both Nune and Varsenik mentioned that teachers are free to supplement lessons as long as they cover the materials in the prescribed textbook.)

Those who previously taught with prescribed Soviet textbooks tend to be relieved to have something different with which to teach. Besides the Russian focus, this is partly because the Soviet textbooks in use in Armenia at the turn of this century were published in the 60s, 70s and 80s—hence twenty to forty years old when I was doing practicum course observations, and curiously out of date for the ‘wired’ children of the 90s and the new century. Heroes of the Soviet Union—such as a courageous submarine boiler tender in World War Two (a lower secondary lesson I have read)—are positively alien to the current language student generation who visit internet cafes and listen to hip-hop. (Pavlenko (2003), who attended Soviet schools at the approximately the same time as the participants, has corroborating memories of Soviet textbook readings, such as ‘brave pioneer Tanya’ (p. 325), which she describes as doing ‘little to increase students’ interest and motivation’.) This is not to say that these textbooks are bad—they have many stalwart proponents, including some of my former students, and for reasons I well understand. Nune, for example, described them as ‘still effective as they suggest bottom-up sequenced activities which are very useful for students working under the supervision of skilled teachers’ (I1C). However, times and the language both necessary and appropriate to
those times change. Commercial Western publishers, with resources to exploit as well as sales to maintain, keep closer tabs on the need for such timeliness. Finding and investing in the Armenian niche market is, of course, an example.

It is clear, therefore, that Western concerns, both governmental and commercial, have played a role in the spread of English in Armenia. It is not so clear, however, whether the participants of this study regard it as imperialistic. Lusine, for example, explained the growth in the popularity of English as a response to the changes Armenia was undergoing after independence.

Why do students want to speak a foreign language? To communicate, of course. And this need has been defined by far more global changes in the Armenian society, our turning into an open and democratic society (I1Q5).

Certainly these global changes are the very ones that raise the spectre of Anglo-linguistic imperialism. But Lusine’s comments on incidents in her own schooling as well as on Soviet textbooks suggest that she regards the Soviet Union, not the West, as the imperialist power. In part of her response to the question, ‘What do you mean by Soviet (or Russian) pedagogy?’ Lusine wrote,

It was heavily influenced by the prevailing ideology. I didn’t really notice until the independence movement in Armenia, and I asked—as it seemed to me a naïve question—to the headmaster about World War Two. I was shocked and hurt when he shouted at me and said he would never believe I could ask such a stupid question. And the question was a very logical one. I asked whether deserting the battlefield is not considered betrayal. The question referred to the communists and of course they could never be traitors (I3Q1).

When asked to expand on her understanding of Soviet pedagogy in the Oral Interview, Lusine spoke about one of her pedagogical courses at Capital University and the textbooks used for it.

‘...it’s ideology. We had a whole semester or even a year on the principles of pedagogy...I just hated to read the textbook because every other word was Soviet, was Lenin said, Engels said....’ (Olp17).

Zara also spoke about limits to her pedagogical education. She was careful to emphasize that these limits were not ideologically motivated after independence, but that the destruction of one of the Institute’s libraries in an earthquake meant that only a few (Soviet) textbooks were available. These books were ideologically limited, however, and this led to
course content also being limited. This occurred in two ways: Russians were emphasized over Armenians, and views had to be acceptable to the Soviet Union.

When they said ‘Soviet’ they definitely meant ‘Russian’ pedagogy. There were a few Armenian methodologists that we had, but they were not so significant as Russians… The Soviet government didn’t accept anything that was not ‘ours’. As a result we didn’t have anything but Russian pedagogy. Lots of changes were taking place in the world (Europe, the U.S.) but we were not aware of any them. And even if we DID have them, they were presented in some negative characteristics. The idea was just one: we are ‘good’, they are ‘bad’ (I3Q1).

But just as Soviet textbooks are value-laden, so are Western textbooks. Not only is pedagogy communicated but also the values of the culture (Phillipson, 1992). But like Canagarajah’s Sri Lankan students (1993), Armenian students are not unaware or uncritical of the cultural agenda, perhaps because of their familiarity with a Russian cultural agenda which they had learned to resist. Zara recounted two incidents in which her students strongly resisted the value-laden message of a commercial Western textbook because it did not fit their ‘Armenian mentality’—which Zara found unpersuasive in one case, but persuasive in another.

I had a group who really minded that [textbook]. This is not a good thing, they had a negative attitude toward it, they didn’t want to accept this ‘Armenian mentality’. But you know we had a topic about cash, like when you’re travelling, you want to take to cash with you or by credit cards or even if you have a bank account. And there were people who were strongly opposed to it. They said, ‘No Armenians would take cards’, even though I decided not to try to persuade. ‘Oh no’, they said, ‘Armenians would take a lot of cash’. This is natural. They, we are not used to it, we are afraid of that, I don’t know, we don’t trust because we have lost a lot of money during all those years that our bank accounts were frozen (OI p.1).

Here students resist suggestions about topics that are, to some extent, either outside their experiences or narrowly interpreted through their experiences; thus Zara thought the students’ attitudes were negative. Perhaps Zara saw the assumptions of the textbook as a means of expanding her students’ knowledge of the world—in other words, to help rather than hinder their ability to communicate meaningfully. But another topic that students resisted made Zara think twice about the values assumed in the textbook:

...one thing that made me really think hard was that we had a topic about changes, changes in life generally. And there was a question, ‘Would you like to change…?’, it was sort of enumeration, ‘to change your life, your flat, your job, and your family’. And it seemed like such a crazy idea to them, I mean the students, because family is something that ‘How can you change your family? It’s stupid’. I’m starting to ask opinions. ‘Do you want to change your family?’ It’s sacred, you know? They say, ‘Oh no, but this is very stupid. This is not a good question. How can we come up with the idea of changing our family? No, never. They should never have asked that question’ (OI p2-3)
Zara herself went on to wonder, ‘For example, what did the author think when he included that particular sentence there alongside with job and flat and such?’ (OIp3). In that case, Zara agreed with her students that the assumption was untenable; in other words, it restricted the students’ abilities to produce meaning (Pennycook, 1995) because it was not based on unfamiliarity (as in the first example) but rather on opposing values that offend the students and force rejection.

Other participants also mentioned concerns about culture. Interestingly, both Lusine and Nune mentioned the Beatles as stimulating their own interest in English, although they had somewhat different feelings about their own students’ interest in non-Armenian culture. To some extent Lusine took a somewhat lighter view of it, writing that for her students,

…it’s just cool to know English. The pop culture is so prevailing in the country with Britney Spears, NSYNC, Shakira, Nelly and the others that every teenager today knows at least what ‘cool baby’ means and ‘yo-yo’s between Armenian sentences (I5Q2). Perhaps part of her lighter view is her own familiarity with Western music, but perhaps also with the appropriation young people display in incorporating short but ‘cool’ English phrases into Armenian conversation. But as was already described, Lusine does take cultural conflict quite seriously in other areas, as shown in the dialogue she moderated on the self-image of young women mentioned above. In an informal conversation after that dialogue, Lusine made connections between the images portrayed in music videos and changing self-images of both young women and young men in Armenia and the confusion that change was creating, especially for young women growing up in what was still a very traditional society. This is hardly uncritical and passive acceptance of cultural imperialism.

A more subtle cultural effect concerns the behaviour of students exposed to communicative language teaching for the first time. Like Shamim (1996) who discovered that her Pakistani students had their own assumptions about the teaching-learning relationship which, when violated, led to classroom management problems, Irina also discovered that Armenian students made similar assumptions that resulted in similar problems.

It was difficult because when [younger students] think that they can speak easily and freely they try not to respect you as a teacher...they think they can say everything...they will speak all the time, they will not let you speak anymore. So that's a problem (OIp10-11).
None of the other participants mentioned precisely this, probably because only one other—Nune—regularly taught children in the classroom. It is possible that Irina’s lack of experience was a factor, since Nune, a very experienced teacher, made no mention of any such difficulties in using communicative language teaching; nor did I see any obvious management problems, although clearly Nune was very comfortable with noisy and exuberant students.

Two other participants described behaviour problems which suggest a climate in which students interpret a less than strict attitude from young and relatively inexperienced teachers as an opportunity to challenge authority. The appearance of ‘friendliness’, which a genuinely communicative class might be said to have, was attributed by both participants as the source of the problem. Hasmik discussed how she took a very different attitude with her younger students than with her older students.

When I have learners like Eva I am trying to be a friend because we are almost the same age…she wouldn’t like the approach, me dictating everything to her…. But when I have teenagers, right now I have two of them, and when I say that I’m your friend they just make use of this. And the next lesson comes and they are not ready…I try to be a strict teacher…when I am strict I feel the result. They just pull themselves together (Olp3).

Varsenik, however, described behaviour problems with her older undergraduate students, such as students not being prepared for class and asking to leave class. ‘If you’re friendly, they can not come to class. They think that you can give them grades and that is all. Friendliness is not a good way of teaching at the Institute’ (Olp2). When she encountered these problems she imitated a favourite teacher whom she described as having ‘very traditional’ (Olp2) classes. Varsenik described her favourite teacher as ‘she was young and she was strict at the same time…and I think she influenced me very much…. If they do something, for instance if they absent from the lessons I become very strict’ (Olp2). In these cases, it appears that less authoritarian teaching styles and communicative lessons are readily misunderstood by some students in a way that more authoritarian teaching styles and traditional lessons are not. It is of course interesting that when confronted with such problems, the participants revert to teaching styles that they remember from observing their own teachers (Lortie, 1975). It also suggests that cultural differences may have a role to play.

Nune was also worried about the effect of Western culture on her students, in particular the way Western life-styles were portrayed in textbooks—even in the Armenian-published textbooks used in state schools.
I feel responsible for every deed I do in the classroom because it should be developmental, it should be progressive, it should be something done without losing your national features.... For example, when we discuss the living style abroad, for example we now have such kind of units, and every student feels, 'Oh, it is better to live abroad. They have so much time, place to play, for pleasure. They have so much time for everything, entertainment and so on'. But you still, as a teacher, it is some national feature you should allow to awake in themselves, something, some dear feelings connected with the country where they live. Because they are coming to class to listen to you. If you try to, you appreciate the living style abroad...but you shouldn’t leave blank points to the ones that you have inside your country.... And right now is the foundation step for them, how to think, how to overcome the difficulties that our country has. And that's why I create the lessons in such a way so that every time [there is] the connection with our country and the English speaking countries. And how shall we bring these positive points from abroad to our country. And how to collaborate all these and mix, and find out what we need in our country (Olp6).

Here Nune expresses not only her concerns, but also her way of addressing those concerns. She neither ignores nor condemns, but rather seeks to encourage her students to think for themselves about what different countries offer to Armenia. Again, there is a sense of English being used to widen rather than narrow horizons. It also offers an interesting perspective in relation to the kind of language teaching the participants received, described by Pavlenko, where ‘imagined communities’ of the Soviet Union and English-speaking countries were uncritically and even propagandistically portrayed during the Soviet Union (2003).

Summary of Beliefs about Language

The issue of linguistic imperialism is a particularly complex one in Armenia, where two different languages—Russian and English—can both stand accused of imperialism. The role of the Armenian diaspora complicates it even further. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Armenians are in the midst of charting out a new future for themselves. Language and language policy is one of many elements in that future. As Pavlenko points out,

national identities are constructed not only through language policies with regard to the national and minority languages, but—at least in some cases—also through FL [foreign language] policies and practices which are influenced by shifting national identity narratives’ (2003, p.314).

Armenians are in the process of constructing a new ‘national identity narrative’ for themselves, and many see English, rather than Russian, as a part of that new identity. The participants of this study are engaged in that process. Their beliefs about why they teach English and why their students learn English are connected to the context in which this search for a new national identity is being conducted. Therefore part of the answer to the second research question is
that beliefs about language in the sociocultural and political context of post-Soviet Armenia play a role as one of the influences on the participants’ personal practical theories.

Although all of the participants identify themselves as bilingual in Armenian and Russian, they perceive the roles of these languages differently. Furthermore, they perceive the role of English still differently, although (possibly excepting Irina), their emotional attitude towards English has far more in common with their attitude towards Armenian than Russian. Although the participants recognize that English (and English language teaching) is not always benign, they also perceive English as playing a more positive role in Armenia’s recent history and future than Russian. This does not mean that they perceive English as a threat to Armenian, however. Few Armenians, including the participants of this study, seriously consider their language and culture threatened by the presence, even the ubiquitous presence, of other languages and cultures. The participants, like all Armenians I have met, are proud to point out that Armenian language and culture are among the world’s very oldest, and Armenians will continue to maintain them as they have done for thousands of years around the world and in Armenia, despite multiple invasions, lengthy periods of colonisation under three different cultures, and attempted genocide. Armenians have a multilingual history; their traditional educational values (as well as their current school system) promote foreign language learning; but they are also masters of the maintenance of their own language and culture, all three points being key features of the ecology-of-language paradigm (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). The maintenance of Armenian has been achieved through educating their children in their language, whether at home or at school, and it is this history that has contributed in large part to the Armenian belief in the importance of education, the topic of the next section.

Beliefs about Education

In general the participants have strong beliefs about the role of education that were closely tied the sociocultural context of Armenia. Therefore, as with the previous sections in this chapter, a certain amount of background information on the Armenian context will be provided. Furthermore, beliefs about the role of education are closely tied to the personal and political values of the participants. These beliefs were subsumed under the following categories (and subcategories): the role of education for society (practical, professional, sociocultural and
political); the role of education for the family; the role of education for the individual (practical, professional, self development, social development, knowing the world); difficulties with education in Armenia; changes in views on education; student expectations; generational differences; changes in views on professional development. These categories were reduced into the themes, used as section headings, of: education, individuals, and values; and education, society, and values; changing attitudes towards education in Armenia; education and professional knowledge; changing attitudes towards teaching as a profession. The beliefs captured by these categories are part of the answer to the second research question on the role of influences on personal practical theories.

**Education, Individuals, and Values**

Enlightenment, development, and improvement were cited by all of the participants as the role education plays for the individual. Furthermore, they see education as forming the individual. Nune quite simply pointed out that ‘The purpose of education is to become an individual…It makes the person different from others, shaping his/her inner world’ (I5Q1). Varsenik pointed out that ‘education begins from birth’ (I5Q1); Irina similarly wrote, ‘We start our education the very moment we are born’ (I5Q1). Hasmik felt that ‘education forms the individual according to his wishes and ambitions’ (I5Q1). In other words, they see education as a starting point for individuating the self, for defining the self as uniquely different from others. It is curious that one participant, Nune, appears to think of the individual as receptive, someone to be shaped by education, while another, Hasmik, sees the individual as constructive, shaping herself as she shapes her education.

A different kind of starting point was described by other participants, who focused on the image of different paths offering different possibilities. For example, Lusine wrote education is ‘A’ (there are many I believe and education is just one of those many) path, a very fascinating, rewarding, sometimes sufficient in itself, challenging, showing directions not terminals, path to self-discovery (I5Q1).

Nune also sees education as offering ‘different ways to the known and unknown.’ Such images focus on the time and effort expended throughout education, as if it were a space traversed, as well as the possibilities that education presents during the journey. Yet another
way of focusing on different possibilities was elaborated on by Irina, who thinks the educated person ‘sees the world and life with other eyes…You take ordinary things and events in some special way, understanding and realizing all the things with many different aspects’ (I5Q1). These general beliefs are related to the participants’ more specific beliefs about English language teaching, as will be seen in Chapter Five.

*Education, Society, and Values*

Several participants discussed the practical outcomes of education for society. Lusine wrote that ‘education is a springboard to prosperity’ because a literate workforce is more efficient (I5Q1). Hasmik wrote that educated people are useful and helpful to society; Varsenik, that the specialists created through education are necessary. Zara described educated people as ‘the gear of any society’ (I5Q1), thereby pointing out the necessary role they play in society, and also suggesting that they move society. She employed a telling metaphor in stating that her own views ‘have become more crystallized and refined. I am more than sure now that education (knowledge, skills) is the strongest weapon a human can have’ (I7Q2). Irina addressed this idea more explicitly.

I think education is the step to having a civilized society and as a result of that having all the institutes of democracy. For example, if we consider a country with a low level of educated society…the people in that country mostly do not think themselves, and are told what to do and how to do. They are like a tool in someone’s hands and mostly are used. But when a society is educated, that means that it just cannot be ignored and used. It is a power that has to be considered and relied on (I5Q1).

This passage may be understood to suggest the TEFL education Irina received at a Western institution with an explicit civil-society-building agenda, in accordance with its mission, offered what was needed to create the vision (if not the reality) of democratic institutions. Alternatively, it may also be understood as a reminder that the Soviet Union may also have offered such values. For whatever its shortcomings, and every system has them (and this not in any way intended to condone or excuse them), for these participants who were born and raised well after the excesses that have come to characterize the Soviet Union for so many Westerners, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia was an educated and civilized society. Indeed, it was a much more educated and civilized society than that of the early years of the
newly independent Republic of Armenia. The participants believe that the difficulties of transition period affect how Armenians view the role of education, the topic of the next section.

Changing Attitudes towards Education in Armenia

‘Armenians are proud of their achievements in education, and this feeling has come from the old times.’ (I5Q1). So writes Nune. She continues,

Armenians adore education and see their freedom in getting it. On the scale they put the Majesty EDUCATION and on the other everything else. All parents try to find a job to send their children to appropriate schools or colleges. And I’d like to mention it has been that way since the earliest times. The proof of it is the well-known Armenians spread all over the world representing our nation in different spheres (I5Q3).

Her views are echoed by the other participants as well. Zara writes that ‘for an average Armenian education is a very important factor in a person’s life. This is the reason every parent strives to provide his/her children with good higher education’ (I5Q3). Irina discusses the topic in a similar vein.

Being educated is encouraged in almost every family, so when an Armenian is born he/she knows that education is important and that he at least should graduate from a university or institute. Also parents of Armenian children do everything in order to give their children every possible opportunity to study. Most children do not only study at secondary schools but they also study music or foreign languages, go in for different kinds of sports and many other things (I5Q3).

Although Armenians in general value education, the trying period after the collapse of the Soviet Union challenged this view. It should be noted that in the early 1990s, during the war with Azerbaijan, Turkey blockaded her border with Armenia. At the same time internal difficulties in Georgia led to the disruption of train service and the severing of a natural gas pipeline, thus making travel and trade difficult across Armenia’s northern border. Combined with the loss of income from the collapse of the Soviet economy as well as the costs of conducting war, Armenia found herself unable to regularly supply basic services or pay wages. This meant that electricity and water ran for no more than a couple of hours each day; that there was no gas heat during winter months; that there was little fuel available for vehicles; and that shelves were bare of imported goods—sometimes even including bread, the staple of the Armenian diet, but mostly made from imported flour. Finally, the rapidly decreasing number of people who still had jobs—much of Armenian manufacturing and industry having collapsed
along with the Soviet Union—did not get paid. Because it is so difficult to believe how bad conditions actually were, I quote two Western academic observers who describe it thusly:

Armenians were on the edge of starvation. Industries were closing, basic necessities were running short, homes were left without heating during one of the region’s worst winters, and bread was scarce (Masih and Krikorian, 1999, p. 69).

I have heard numerous people recount the difficulties of everyday life during those years: virtually everyone was poor and cold and hungry. Schools and universities had to be closed in the winter when it was too cold and dark to hold classes. Yet they remained open as often as they could, and more than one student and teacher walked miles to get to their classes when no public transportation—or no money to pay for it—was available.

Nune is the only one of the participants whose perspective on those years is that of a parent as well as a teacher. She also lived and worked in the one of the areas of the capital hardest hit by the economic collapse following the break-up of the Soviet Union, since virtually everyone in her neighbourhood, including Nune herself for a short period (see above), had worked in a factory that was forced to close. She commented at length about the effect of those years.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the attitude towards education changed greatly as everybody’s concern was to support their families and find jobs because the factories were closed, the population became unemployed, there was a blockade for goods providers and the uncertainty lasted for years. In these years no electricity was available for the Armenians and even the lessons were done under the light of candles. On those days the teenagers were helping their parents to survive and no time was left for education. Fortunately, there were some parents for whom education still remained in its real value and an only means for a better future. Even under the light of candles they didn’t lose their optimism and belief (I5Q1).

Zara corroborates this view, writing that ‘there was a time when people in Armenia were suspicious about the positive role of education in the country because of the difficult transition period that we are still going through’ (I5Q1). All of the participants of this study were either studying or working (or both) during the early transition years, and all of them endured these hardships. While compromises had to be made in many families, the point is that education continued as best it could even under the worst conditions.

The effect of those years is still evident. Although electricity has been restored, in most areas of the capital water still runs for only a few hours a day, usually in the early morning or early evening. During practicum visits over two years and in the weeks I spent observing for
this study, I never saw running water in a school or institute except for one Western-sponsored university. There is still no heat in schools in the winter. Many school and university classrooms have damaged desks, chairs, and chalkboards. Windows are often broken as well, and where necessary are covered with cardboard and tape. In general, most schools and universities have had only the most desperately needed repairs, and in many cases it is difficult to believe that any repairs at all have been done since 1991. This is most apparent from the outside: most schools look like abandoned buildings until students are let out for recess. (This is true even for Armenians. A concerned local taxi driver I hired to drive me to a school for an observation for this study passed by it several times, refusing to stop and let me out despite my assurances that it was indeed a functioning school, until several locals confirmed it.)

But it is not entirely so grim inside these schools. Most schools, although known by numbers, are named after famous Armenian figures, and so there is usually a memorial in the entrance: a portrait, a few significant objects on display, flowers or candles. Student work is nearly always on display, too, if only taped to the peeling paint of the walls. A surprising number of schools have original art work—oil paintings, sculptures—as well. And the remnants of better days—empty aquariums, fading murals, dead gardens, and broken playgrounds—suggest that the pride most Soviet-educated people have for their education was well-placed. Such reminders, of course, serve to highlight the contrast between nostalgic memories and difficult realities, including the contrast between being a professional in the Soviet Union and being a professional in post-Soviet Armenia. This contrast will be dealt with by considering the participants’ views of the role of education and professional knowledge and the changing attitudes towards teaching as a profession, the topics of the next two sections.

**Education and Professional Knowledge**

The role of education in gaining professional knowledge was not ignored by the participants. Five of the participants mentioned the role of education in gaining professional knowledge. Lusine, for example, contrasted the ‘broad view’ of education with a narrower view, where ‘on a more practical level education is a means to prepare a fully-functioning professional’ (I5Q1). Nune also contrasted her broader views, writing, ‘Education has another sense too, that is education means a perfect salary, a comfortable lifestyle and self-satisfaction
for any profession' (I5Q1). Hasmik wrote that education makes an individual ‘a professional in his field’ (I5Q1), while Varsenik wrote that it makes one ‘a specialist’ (I5Q1). Zara also mentioned that the purpose of education ‘is obtaining the necessary skills and knowledge in your chosen field’ (I5Q1).

The participants felt that teaching was a profession that offered opportunities for development. It was more than just a job. Hasmik addressed it by saying that teaching ‘just for your living, it won’t work.... But if you like the job, you should find innovations’ (OIp9). Varsenik also saw professional development in this way, writing that ‘He/she studies every day, he/she discovers new materials, he/she creates new ways of teaching and materials’ (I3Q2). Zara also addressed this, writing that teachers always need perfection, no matter how many years of experience they may have.... First, the teacher her/himself should be aware of the fact that s/he shouldn’t be satisfied with the existing knowledge all time. There is always something new to learn (I3Q5).

However, Zara also saw that being a professional could lead in other directions besides practice. Using the same image of a path, Zara sees it as well-trod by generation after generation.

The purpose of education for any individual...is obtaining the necessary skills and knowledge in your chosen field.... You can go further and further for achieving higher level of academic excellence, or you can start sharing your knowledge with those who have just entered the everlasting path of taking the same steps you once did. This is a recurring cycle, which is as old as humanity (I5Q1).

Thus Zara sees education as both an individual and a social process. Furthermore, the language Zara employs suggests that those who ‘share’, that is teach, are engaged in an essentially social process, while those who strive for the heights of academic excellence may perhaps be somewhat isolated from those social processes. This is a reminder of the theory/practice divide discussed by Clark, Ellis, Kumaravadivelu, Prabhu, and van Lier. Nune brought up the potential split between theory and practice much more explicitly, writing that ‘there are some cases when the person has education but can’t integrate the practice with the theory and has failure’ (I5Q1). This suggests that Nune may be inclined to see education as more theoretical, something to be applied to or interpreted by practice. Her mention of problem-solving skills suggests that she might associate the inability to integrate theory and practice with the inability to exercise problem-solving skills. It also points in the direction of the art/craft
model of teaching (Freeman and Richards, 1993), post-method principles (Prabhu, 1994), professional on-line decision-making (Eraut, 1994), provisional specifications (Ellis, 1997), and problematizing the unproblematic (Tsui, 2003), all of which emphasize the necessity of (individual) professionals making informed judgments in their practices. This raises the issue of the importance of individual autonomy for teachers, which will be addressed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. Zara’s comment, however, also suggests that within a profession there may be tensions between personal goals and societal goals. These tensions, as hinted at above, are reflected in changing attitudes towards the profession of teaching in the transition period in Armenia.

**Changing Attitudes towards Teaching as a Profession**

The participants felt there was tension between how they perceived themselves as professionals and the way they felt society perceived them. They felt that practicing teachers were not valued as respected professionals. Several of the participants mentioned the lowered position of teachers since Armenian independence, seeing it reflected in poor pay. While poor pay was certainly an issue, it was also recognized as one that many people struggled with. As Zara explained,

> It’s impossible because teachers are so badly paid. And this government really has to do something about it. You know when I say that teachers are not very well-paid, they say, ‘Oh, what about others? Scientists are not well-paid, everybody is not well-paid. Everybody is underpaid.’ (OIp17).

Despite this acknowledgement that other professionals shared the same situation, being underpaid was perceived as indicating a lack of status and even respect that was once common currency for teachers in the Soviet Union. The participants tied this to the difficult times Armenia had endured, when ‘education was left aside’ (Nune, OIp15) in the struggle to meet basic needs. Nune felt that teachers maintained a steady spirit through the difficult years after independence to today.

Teachers in Armenia, most of them in general are heroes as they were working in those dark times; they are working now without taking into account their small salaries. You can see teachers who [dress] more badly than their pupils or wear the same suit during the whole year (I3Q3).
Although life has improved considerably since those years, the economic and social status of teachers has not. Indeed, some might say that the materialistic focus of the West is partly responsible for this; Nune made a suggestive reference to education becoming ‘like [a] market’ (Olp15). Although she pointed out that things were getting better, she added ‘I hope the status of teachers in some years will be the same as it was in the former Soviet years’ (Olp15).

Lowered status was felt in other ways, too. Several of the participants noted that advanced degrees are necessary to permanent employment in Armenian academia, just as they are in Western academia. However, just as in the West, financial pressures coupled with shifting demand for English teaching has led to many part-time temporary English teaching positions in Armenia. And, just as in the West, these positions offer less compensation, few benefits, and little status as well as no permanence, reflecting a lowered position for teachers.

A related problem to professional development in Armenia is the lack of research opportunities. Zara left her employment at Provincial Institute to study at Western University because

if I wanted to become a permanent staff I had to do researches or study and get higher degree. I could do neither of them in [Provincial City] because there weren’t decent libraries or appropriate institutions to realize my purpose (I1Q4).

And even if she had the materials for research, there would be difficulties in disseminating it; ‘if you try to write a research and publish it later, you will encounter a lot of financial and technical problems’ (I3Q2). Even though they were not intended for publication, research papers for TEFL Certificate courses appeared to be regarded as opportunities to develop a body of knowledge and a set of skills. Several of the participants commented positively about writing research papers, considering it an important part of their professional development, and a few of them have since gone on to present and publish locally.

Nune touched on all of these points and tied them to even broader issues.

It is not undertaken in our society, the professional development of teachers. It is a very poor point for all of us. Suppose I had no chance to participate in all these programs, suppose I am not allowed presentations [the Western sponsored program for which Nune did teacher training seminars], everything was just going around. Life is going on and you are just separated in your home, and no information in, no information out. You think that you are right in everything you did, and no criteria for being developed, no steps for going ahead (Olp18).

Nune here focuses on isolation in the transition period and its consequences. Although it is not clear whether Nune is referring to the isolation of individual teachers (‘in your home’) or the
relative isolation of Armenia (‘in our society’) or both, it is clear that she believes that isolation involves a lack of information. This has two consequences according to my interpretation of Nune, both failures of perspective. One is the failure to see teaching from any perspective other than it being right, since it is the only available perspective. The lack of information means there is nothing with which to compare, and thus no reason to develop or improve. The other is the failure to see teaching from any perspective other than the present, since if it is right it does not require further development. The lack of information means there is no goal towards which to aim, and thus again no reason to develop or improve. Thus Nune sees it as a failure of professional development.

This suggests the critical role that the TEFL Certificate programme played in the professional development of the participants that will be discussed in the next section. It was not the mere content of new information which was only important; it was the sheer fact of the existence of the information which was truly important. That information—much of which was new relative to the participants—offered a second perspective to the Soviet pedagogical education with which comparisons could be made and aims could be established. As will be seen in the rest of this chapter and the next two chapters, the participants do appear to have synthesized information from a variety of sources to create personal practical theories. And, to presage the final chapter, I venture that critical reflection, such as comparison—whether of a gap empty and filled, ‘Soviet’ theory and ‘Western’ theory, this practice and that practice—enabled this process for these participants, and possibly enables it for everyone.

The effects of this process can perhaps best be seen in the fact that since the data collection for this research two of the six participants completed their MAs, two applied for MA programmes, and one applied for a PhD programme. This also concretely shows how seriously these participants take their professional self-development.

**Summary of Beliefs about Education**

All of the participants believe in the fundamental importance of education to individual and social development. All of the participants are also acutely aware of the times in which others educated them in language and the times in which they are now educating others in language. They grew up under one system, witnessed its collapse, and are living through the
struggles to build a new system. They are not uniform in their attitudes towards the transition and its impact on education. At one pessimistic extreme, one of the participants is quite openly nostalgic for the better times she enjoyed in the past. At the other optimistic extreme, another sees present difficulties in light of the certainty of a freer, and therefore better, future. Such general attitudes inform their understandings of the role of education in Armenia. Thus part of the answer to the second research question is that one influence on the participants’ personal practical theories has been the role of personal beliefs about the importance of education for the development of individuals and society in the sociocultural and political context of post-Soviet Armenia.

However, even at the extremes, the participants neither fully reject nor fully accept, in uncritical ways, their Soviet heritage or the Western alternative in language education. This subtle perspective that values an individual, critical response extends to their views on their own language learning and teaching educations. The following section will explore these beliefs. The participants’ understandings of their own language education will be considered first, and then their language teaching education will be discussed.

**Beliefs about the Participants’ Language and Language Teaching Education**

This section explores the participants’ beliefs about their language and language teaching educations. It therefore is part of the answer to the second research question on the role of influences that have shaped the participants’ personal practical theories. It based on the categories (and subcategories): Soviet pedagogy (objectives, courses, influence), Western pedagogy (objectives, courses, influence), professional development, theory versus practice, and (Soviet versus Western) practicum aims, practicum organization, observers, practicum expectations, preparation for observations, effects on observation (emotional, on students, practical), observation feedback.

Whatever opinions the participants may have of the Soviet Union as a political entity, they are uniform in their praise of the education they received. To be sure, there were aspects that rankled once they saw other possibilities, in this study in particular concerning language education, but in general the participants believe their education gave them a solid foundation. In part this is due to their valuing all education. The participants also have specific praise. Most
frequently mentioned was the breadth and depth of study in Soviet schools and tertiary institutions. One participant, Zara, singled out the systematic presentation of material. However, she also pointed out that much was missing from their education.

Soviet education was really very good. It was very systematic, it was like simply the main drawback was that we were ignorant of certain things…. [There were] Western things from 10th century, 11th, 12th, I’m not sure exactly. But for 19th and 20th century there was nothing, there was just only Russian (Olp13).

When questioning other participants, one Western name arose repeatedly: although every participant had taken one or more undergraduate linguistics courses, none of them had even heard of Noam Chomsky until they took Linguistics in the TEFL Certificate programme. Zara in particular was bothered by the omission of such an important figure. ‘If he was one of the greatest linguists in the world, why not [include him]?’ (Olp13). (On the other hand, much Soviet thought was similarly omitted in Western education.)

By contrast, most of the participants felt that their Western TEFL education was deep, but not particularly broad. They all stated that the practical was emphasized over the theoretical. This will be dealt with in considerably more detail in later sections on language teaching and learning, but must be raised here to illustrate a general view the participants have of education. Most of the participants believe that education is a source of enlightenment. It is not only a means to an end, but an end in itself, to be valued whether there are any practical, measurable outcomes or not. This may perhaps be best illustrated by the attitude of the unemployed participant. When asked if it was worth the time, money, and effort to have studied for her TEFL certificate in light of her current unemployment, Irina’s answer was that of course it was worthwhile, if only because ‘that was really interesting’ (Olp8).

This section will explore this theme in greater detail by focusing specifically on the participants’ views of their own formal language and language teaching education. It will expand this overall impression, in particular how the participants related this impression to the theoretical and practical elements of their educations. This will include a look through the participants’ eyes at the courses the participants took in their Soviet undergraduate and Western graduate programs. First the participants’ beliefs under the categories of school and undergraduate language, undergraduate language teaching, and practicum courses will be presented. Then the participants’ beliefs under the categories TEFL Certificate language,
language teaching, and practicum courses will be presented. It should be noted that although a few preliminary connections between the participants’ espoused beliefs and actual practices will be made in this section for the sake of clarity, the focus of this section is on espoused beliefs about their educations.

**Beliefs about (Soviet) School and Undergraduate Language Education**

Although the participants in general believed that they received a deep and broad education, it does not mean that they were without criticism. Most of them found that their school language courses failed to adequately address speaking and listening. Varsenik wrote that there was ‘no attention to the speaking’ (I3Q1) such that she worked hard on her own to develop what she calls ‘listening memory’ (Olp7). Hasmik said that on finishing school ‘I knew that my scores were very high, but in case I met a native speaker I would never be able to speak with him or her’ (Olp5). Lusine described herself as ‘incompetent in using the language I’d been learning ABOUT so much’ (I1Q5). Zara said, ‘I don’t remember the teachers speaking English in class, but only the stuff in the book, the rest was in Armenian. And there was no communication…’ (Olp10). She recalled a seminal moment in secondary school that revealed her spoken English language skills:

> After the earthquake we had a group of British people who came to our school. And…they had learned that there was an English school and they decided that they can hear some people speak English. So they came to our school and they were shocked at our English because we were talking like, for instance, English from 17th, 18th century because our books were like that…. We didn’t know how to use ‘I don’t know’, ‘How are you’, or things like that (Olp10).

Nune had a somewhat fuller experience; she referred to her school teacher allowing ‘ourselves to choose the topics to be discussed. We had some equipment for recording and all these headphones bought at her own expense’ (Olp12). But this experience led to its own difficulties: the teacher had problems dealing with local school authorities to the extent that ‘the headmaster for those times in our school just forbade her to use all these headphones’ (Olp12).

Undergraduate tertiary institutions offered more in the way of speaking and listening for some of the participants, although not for all. Hasmik said ‘my focus was only form’, so when she finally did meet that native speaker in her second year ‘I wasn’t able to utter a word in English although my grammar was perfect’ (Olp5). Zara found that her undergraduate
language classes were better than those in secondary school because there were a greater
diversity of activities, including dialogues, ‘and one of the assignments was that we had to make
these dialogues ourselves, like we were talking to engage in conversation together’ (Olp10).
There were also literary discussions of home reading. Lusine, who attended Capital University,
described her first two years of language courses as ‘very traditional grammar-translation.’ In
her third year, however, she had what she described as ‘an extraordinary woman’ for her
English teacher (I1Q5). Although the course was literature, the teacher apparently incorporated
teaching ideas from a Western textbook which she was using in another teaching position at a
private, Western-run college.

She was the only one who was trying to address any communicative needs we had and
provide meaningful and interesting contexts for our learning. She was doing pair and
group work, integrating the four language skills (I1Q5).

Although Lusine said that this teacher did not do truly communicative teaching, she described it
as ‘a very good attempt’ and ‘a major improvement’ over her previous language classes (Olp9).
In fact, only one participant, Irina, indicated that ‘there was a lot of speaking’ in her
undergraduate language courses; she graduated from one of the new, private universities in the
late 90s.

These beliefs about the limitations of their language educations should not be
interpreted as in any way indicating that the participants were completely dissatisfied with their
undergraduate language courses. Virtually all of the participants believe that they had learned a
great deal about the English language, and in particular about its forms. Informal conversations
with not only these participants but also other TEFL Certificate programme students and other
Armenian EFL teachers indicated that they were proud of their knowledge of English grammar
(and rightfully so), often discovering that they actually had more metalinguistic knowledge than
some of their TEFL Certificate instructors. Furthermore, most of the participants had also read
a great deal of English-language literature, something they were especially proud of. This is
precisely what the participants mean about the depth and breadth of their Soviet education,
despite the fact that this may well have disguised its weaknesses (Pavlenko, 2003).

Thus the participants recognize that there are strengths in form-focused instruction as
well as weaknesses. Indeed, they feel that much of what they know about teaching grammar
was learned through studying grammar. As’ Irina put it, none of the TEFL Certificate students
needed a grammar teaching course because ‘we know how to teach grammar by heart’ from having spent so much time learning it (Olp13). Even Zara, who had taught grammar at a tertiary institute but still felt that ‘an advanced grammar course for teachers who deal with grammar in everyday instruction’ might be a useful addition to the TEFL Certificate programme (I4Q1), also felt that the main practical benefit of her undergraduate education was grammar ‘because it’s just like the same everywhere, no matter where you study’ (Olp18). This topic will be briefly returned to below, and then discussed again in light of teaching practices in Chapter Five. Here, however, it illustrates the fact that the participants found much to value even as they found much to criticize in their undergraduate language educations.

Beliefs about (Soviet) Undergraduate Language Teaching Education

In general, the participants said that their Soviet undergraduate pedagogical courses were theoretical and knowledge-oriented, rather than practical and practice-oriented as were their Western TEFL Certificate courses. This theoretical focus is described by others who underwent Soviet pedagogical training as well (Gettys, 2000), and has been described as a characteristic generally true of Soviet intellectual life.

Theoretical achievements have a good chance of being transmitted to the next generation, thus bringing the scholar satisfaction, but with a practical project one can never be sure whether it will be destroyed by the next shift in social attitude (Kozulin, 1984, p. 153).

The strong theoretical focus of the participants’ undergraduate courses is not apparent at first glance from course names. (I have followed the participants’ translations of course names.) Many subjects had both a ‘theoretical’ and a ‘practical’ course: Theoretical Pedagogy and Practical Pedagogy; Theoretical Grammar and Practical Grammar; Theoretical Phonology and Practical Phonology.

The theoretical courses, unlike the practical courses, appear to have taken a historical perspective to at least some extent. Thus, the Theoretical Pedagogy course was described by Nune as presenting the ‘history of pedagogy’ (Olp10). While it covered mostly Russian educationists, it nonetheless also included Western thinkers such as Rousseau and Piaget (Nune, Olp10). Zara described this course as offering ‘a rich and valuable history…to the original roots of pedagogy’ (I3Q1). She also pointed out, however, that it didn’t include any outside views that were incompatible with Soviet views. Lusine offered a somewhat more
jaundiced view of Theoretical Pedagogy: she described it as ‘just ideology’, amounting to a course about ‘Lenin said, Engels said’ (Olp17). (In fact, Lusine felt that many of her colleagues used the word ‘theory’ to refer to what would be better described as ‘ideology’. She felt that it was possible that when participants made comments that TEFL Certificate courses were not theoretical, what they really meant was that they were not ideological (Olp17).) Lusine was educated at Capital University in the capital, and possibly had a more politically correct (i.e., Sovietized) version of the course than the provincial institute which Zara attended, which also suffered under the handicap of having had most of its library holdings destroyed in an earthquake. Irina and Varsenik both described the course as being very theoretical, with Irina commenting that ‘the topics we studied and were focused on were quite old’ (I3Q2).

The participants did not actually remember much about their Practical Pedagogy course, which is perhaps just as revealing as what they did remember. Varsenik remembered being taught ‘translation’ (I3Q1). Hasmik remembered being taught about different methods, although not CLT. She described it thusly:

When we did this course in Russian again the teacher came and she delivered the lecture, this is the method and these are the facts of the method that you should know for the exam, what method is this, what use is this. I didn’t find it [useful]. I say these are the advantages, these are the disadvantages, but so what? Nothing that can be applied (Olp6).

Both Zara (Olp15) and Lusine (Olp11-12) remembered being taught the grammar-translation method and ‘maybe’ the direct method of teaching. The standard Soviet textbook in use at that time, *Methods of Teaching English* (Rogova, 1975), confirms that both of these methods are discussed in detail, with both advantages and disadvantages given for them. The method mainly discussed in Rogova is the Soviet ‘conscious-practical’ method, which forms the basis for the more detailed skills-oriented chapters that follow the methods chapter of the book. In Chapter Five this method will be discussed in greater detail, and its apparent influence on some of the participants will be shown in an analysis of their teaching beliefs and practices. But whether this influence came from this textbook being used in the practical pedagogy course, which only one participant mentioned without prompting (Zara), or from their experiences as students of language, is not so clear, as mentioned above.

Most of the participants also described the grammar courses. Zara described Theoretical Grammar as ‘different theories about grammar, like a little bit of history and now
where do they stand...we had different grammarians' points of view about grammar' (Olp11). Practical Grammar was about 'how to teach grammar at school' and covered 'different tenses, moods, or whatever, and we have exercises. We're just learning grammar, but on a professional level' (Olp11). Hasmik also described it in this way, pointing out that theoretical grammar 'was like a story about grammar' that 'provides the teacher with good knowledge to explain grammar rules explicitly', and was useful to teachers ‘because teachers should know what they are teaching’ (Olp5). Practical Grammar ‘was like what we are teaching now to our students’ (Olp5).

A similar distinction exists for Theoretical and Practical Phonology. According to Zara, Theoretical Phonology concerned ‘theoretical things...like onomatopoeia or Zygmunt’s point’ (Olp19), while Practical Phonology focused on ‘sounds and how to pronounce them exactly...they were accompanied by practical things like...tongue twisters' (Olp18-19). Other participants did not remember such a practical focus, so again it is possible that there was a difference between her instructor’s presentations and those of the other participants.

In general, therefore, theoretical courses typically appear to have had a historical perspective of knowledge within a subject, while the practical courses appear to have covered classroom-oriented knowledge. This was not necessarily (or even usually) how to teach that knowledge, but rather a presentation of the knowledge that was to be taught. This view of knowledge as a product to be transmitted is also evident in the participants’ descriptions of their undergraduate Practicum course, which involved a full semester of teaching under the supervision of a classroom teacher.

Beliefs about (Soviet) Undergraduate Practicum Course

The participants did indicate that their undergraduate Practicum course was practical, often mentioning it in order to contrast it with all the other ‘theoretical’ courses (regardless of their official name). Despite its practicality, the undergraduate Practicum elicited quite critical comments. Lusine described an ‘institutional attitude’ of regarding the Practicum as merely a formal requirement (I2C).

I’ve heard a lot of English graduates say that the practicum was just a requirement to complete, that’s all. For most it was not a real learning experience, for others it was, but the role of the supervisor usually was minimal (I2C).
Lusine relies here on the comments of others because in her case she was hired to replace the classroom teacher who was supposed to be her mentor, but who had suddenly fallen ill. Thus Lusine was completely unsupervised in her Practicum as well as completely inexperienced in her first teaching position—at the same time. It therefore was not much of a learning experience from the practicum perspective, although Lusine did appear to have learned a lot from her experiences.

Irina also felt there was a certain lackadaisical quality to her Practicum:

I expected to learn something practically, I mean something practically from a real teacher. I cannot say my expectations were satisfied....Actually there was not any specific organization concerning the observations (I2Q1).

Other participants were dissatisfied because they felt their undergraduate Practicum course was overly organized. Nune pointed out that her Practicum was ‘a bit poor because it was strictly organized. We didn’t organize all these courses at school when we had [to teach them] ourselves. It was organized by the master or teacher’ (Olp9). Hasmik’s Practicum was also overly organized ‘because the Practicum I did at [Premier Institute] was based just on the lesson plan’ (Olp5). Varsenik also mentioned the importance of lesson plans, contrasting them with larger aims. ‘At the university you have no aim, it is a given plan...you should do it. It is not important if all the students manage to do it’ (I1C). And although Lusine did not, technically speaking, have a Practicum course since she was hired to replace her mentor, the textbook focus of the course was made clear to her. She describes the principal as saying, ‘...here’s the textbook, go teach’, and ‘This is where the teacher finished. Do as much as you can’ (Olp18).

The participants also criticized the feedback they received. The comments of some participants suggest that because following the textbook (or a lesson plan focused on the textbook) was of paramount importance, the feedback was focused on reinforcing this. Hasmik, for example, said

...if you did something unplanned you could get a remark, a bad remark about this, that you are impatient, that you are not a good teacher, and this would affect your grades. I was afraid of a getting a low grade so I did everything step by step mentioned in the plan (Olp5).

Varsenik felt that she was not given enough opportunity to discuss her lesson. She wrote that ‘we did not discuss very much about my lesson. She only mentioned her comments’, which all appear negative from the examples Varsenik gives: ‘I should make the students translate’ and ‘I
should give the students vocabulary’ (I2Q4). The overwhelmingly negative aspect was also commented on by Irina. She wrote that ‘the observers just noted the mistakes, and did not tell anything about how to correct those mistakes’ (I2Q1). Nor did everyone agree with their instructor. Nune had peer observation as well as instructor observation, which led to a variety of opinions. She said, ‘Even if the instructor told us for example that something went wrong or went well, students have different opinions because they thought it was a better chance for us to do this or that’ (Olp9). This appeared to have a positive side for Nune, however: ‘We took all those comments into consideration, developed ideas’ (Olp9-10). Only Zara had entirely positive comments about the feedback she received.

After the observation we usually had short discussions with the teacher and sometimes with other observed students. During the discussions the teacher usually pointed out all the weaknesses and strengths of the observed class…. I have learned a lot from all my observations. All the teachers and peers who have observed my classes have been very helpful with all their comments and corrections (I2Q1).

The focus of the participants’ undergraduate Practicum courses appears to have been more on what to teach rather than on how to teach. Their descriptions of the feedback they received reinforce this perception. Thus even in the most practice-oriented part of their undergraduate programme, there was an underlying orientation to transmitting knowledge as a product on the behavioural model of teaching (Freeman, 1994). Because the delivery of the product was judged by the product itself, the delivery system—teaching—was not directly addressed. This lack of explicit guidance left the participants feeling unprepared for teaching. As Zara, who appeared to have the most positive experience put it, ‘When I graduated from the Institute I wasn’t sure, am I going to be teaching or not, because I was not so confident of my knowledge’ (Olp17). Despite her misgivings—typical of any novice teacher—Zara was immediately hired to teach Grammar, Phonetics, and General English in the programme she had just completed. This attitude contrasts strongly with attitudes upon completing the TEFL Certificate programme, as will be seen in the next section on the TEFL Certificate programme. However, as will be explored in Chapter Five, the fact that the participants do not clearly remember all of the possible the influences on their teaching leaves open the possibility that influences that are not entirely explicit may have also influenced some of the participants’ pedagogical knowledge and skills. These include the knowledge the participants had indirectly gathered about teaching from their years as students, as well as unacknowledged knowledge
that had become fully proceduralized, and conscious (and unconscious) imitation of favourite teachers.

**Summary of Beliefs about (Soviet) Undergraduate Education**

In summary, part of the answer to the second research question is that both theoretical information and individual perception and reflection, based on experiences in their Soviet undergraduate education, are influences on the participants’ personal practical theories. Furthermore, part of the answer to the first research question is that the participants’ personal practical theories developed through the transmission of information and tacit knowledge of teaching developed during learning experiences.

The participants had a range of views concerning their undergraduate pedagogical education. However, there are a number of similarities. While the participants in general felt that they had acquired a great deal of knowledge, they also seemed to feel that their undergraduate education failed to provide them with a complete pedagogical education. One possible explanation is the kind of feedback the participants received in their Practicum courses, which focused on ensuring that the information in the textbook was covered. This kind of feedback may have reinforced the underlying assumption that appears to have been the foundation of other courses in the programme: that the aim of education is to transmit knowledge, so teaching is best viewed as a means to transmit that knowledge. The transmission view of teaching is acknowledged by others familiar with educational practices in Armenia (Antonian and Davis, 2002). Teaching is therefore judged by the accuracy and completeness of the knowledge transmitted. By following the textbook and completing lessons planned around the textbook, teachers ensure that the knowledge they are transmitting is accurate and complete. This, then, is the scientific model (Zahorik, 1986, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993) or behavioural model (Freeman, 1994) of teaching. In fact Soviet foreign language teaching has been described as one branch of ‘a science of education’ (Gettys, 2000). Thus the methodology underlying the way the participants were taught content as well as the way they learned to teach appears, at least in part, to have contributed to the participants’ dissatisfaction with their pedagogical education.
The dissatisfaction of the participants suggests Kumaravadivelu’s distinction between the theorizers at ‘the power centre of language pedagogy’ and practitioners at ‘the disempowered periphery’ (1994, p. 28-29). Some of the participants already felt disempowered before their teaching careers had even begun, thanks to the rigidity of their practicum course. And while a sense of disempowerment may be typical of neophytes (they are neophytes after all), that in no way negates the fact that it is precisely how some of these participants felt.

The participant’s comments on their undergraduate practicum course also suggest that another, possibly more significant, factor was also at work in their dissatisfaction, that may be a sign of a nascent sense of autonomy. One source of dissatisfaction was being required to follow a book or a plan, apparently not of their own devising. This discomfort with the idea that anyone other than the practicing teacher should determine what happens in the classroom may have been based on the fact that they had been taught to rely on a particular method, but they failed to see its suitability to their classroom, perhaps in part because they were aware of the weaknesses in their own language learning experiences. Again, the idea that noticing requires attention to be directed to something in some way seems to be playing a role here. The participants found themselves in a position to compare themselves as students with their new roles as student-teachers. Indeed, there is a doubling of the image, for the participants are in the position of comparing themselves as students of language with themselves as students of teaching, as well as themselves as students of language with themselves as teachers of language. This double perspective perhaps made the experience all the more acutely felt—that is, all the more noticeable.

Kumaravadivelu describes what might have been focal points for the participants’ dissatisfaction: first, the methods the participants were required to use were not derived from classroom experience, but rather mostly from psychology (Gettys, 2000); second, the Practicum, and the upshot of the participants’ training, overlooked teacher autonomy (as the participants lack of input into planning suggests). Thus, after van Lier, the participants felt themselves to be inauthentic because they were not autonomous (1996). Kumaravadivelu makes another point—that eclecticism is not appropriate either, because its practitioners do not work from a base of principled practices; but this option was only available to Lusine, who, with neither prescription nor support (van Lier, 2002) from the professionals around her, did indeed
embark on a course of eclecticism based on solely her own experiences and preferences, anticipating her later, principled language teaching beliefs and practices (Feryok, 2003).

The McDonoughs (1994) offer further explanation of why teachers reject theory and the research it is based on. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, the McDonoughs suggest that teachers feel that they are uninvolved in theory-making because theory focuses on products rather than processes and does not offer explicit links to practices. It would appear that these explanations could account for some of the participants’ negative attitudes towards their undergraduate programme. The participants were virtually unanimous in saying that they felt there were no practical outcomes from their pedagogical courses. In fact, there were practical outcomes, as will be seen in Chapter Five; but perhaps because no explicit links were made between the theories (both source and local) and classroom practices, the participants did not recognize their influence. As described above, in the Practicum they were expected to follow lesson plans based on required textbooks; feedback was restricted to ‘mistakes’ made in following the lesson plan and textbook. Thus from what the participants remember, there did not appear to be any links, for example, between information from Practical Pedagogy with teaching practices in the Practicum. This is rather different than saying that they ‘rejected’ what they were taught, because many of the participants did feel that they learned a great deal; but they did ‘reject’ the idea that the pedagogical courses were useful to their teaching. Furthermore, it is clear that one of the reasons the participants were critical of both their undergraduate language and pedagogical courses is because, as Lusine put it, ‘It was extremely product-oriented. Many times the process of learning was ignored and the only importance was attached to the final grade, which was actually determined only through the final examination’ (I3Q1). As has been described above, they believed that they neither learned to communicate effectively in their language courses nor to teach effectively in their pedagogical courses because the product was focused on at the expense of the process. Again, this is not to say that the participants ‘rejected’ the courses; they valued what they did get, but rejected the idea that the product orientation was sufficient. They wanted to know ‘how’ as well as ‘what’. Hasmik referred to this as she described how she felt an undergraduate programme should be organized, apportioning both praise and criticism to her own tertiary institute.

[Premier Institute] teaches the aspects of the language very thoroughly. I approve of it, because when students first enter [Premier Institute] they are teenagers who have just
passed their entrance examinations. Naturally the students need to acquire language in depth, including all aspects of the language. But in the fourth and fifth year along with the language learning the students should be introduced to the language [teaching] methodology, current issues in language teaching and research done in these areas. Moreover the students should be taught how to teach different language skills. Of course these things are taught but very superficially (I3Q1).

Finally, despite the practicality of the practicum course, the participants described a feedback process in which they were expected to listen and accept their mentor’s views, so that they were, in effect, uninvolved recipients. Thus the practicum course can also be seen as being ‘rejected’ for being insufficient in this respect.

As will be seen in the next chapter, some of the participants do in fact subscribe to ‘Soviet’ views, as their actual teaching practices reveal. But for some reason this did not appear to be consciously apparent to all of them as attributable their undergraduate programme. There may by a variety of reasons for this. One possible explanation, based on the participants’ comments about their own language learning experiences, was that their perception of language teaching was heavily informed by grammar-translation as well as, or instead of, the conscious-practical method. Or, because of the form-focused nature of both, the participants may not have become aware of the differences between the two despite the explicit treatment the subject receives in their English teaching methodology textbook. Alternatively (and possibly in addition to the above), the participants may have ‘tuned-out’ to the extent that they did not hear about the differences between the two in pedagogy courses, but ‘tuned in’ enough throughout their learning experiences to have a sense of its basic principles, and use those to inform their own teaching principles. That is, the participants may have made greater use of their tacit knowledge than their declarative knowledge of grammar teaching. There is also, of course, the simple fact that they may have forgotten some of the declarative knowledge that was the theoretical foundation for their practices. As Chapter Five: Espoused and Inferred Beliefs about Practices will show, several of the participants do in fact have a considerable body of declarative knowledge of the conscious-practical method despite not referring to the theory by name.

Another possible explanation for why the participants thought they were unprepared for teaching concerns the aims of their undergraduate programme. The programme had a dual purpose: to prepare teachers for English language education, and to prepare translators and
interpreters. In fact, several of the participants undertook their undergraduate programmes with the intention of becoming translators rather than teachers, and may have understood their programmes in light of their goals. For example, Lusine thought that the focus on grammar-translation, structures, and vocabulary-building suggested that perhaps their programme was a better preparation for translation than for teaching.

Some of the participants were also at pains to indicate that the lack of contemporary information and materials was one (but not the only) factor contributing to the weakness of their undergraduate pedagogical educations. This lack of contemporary information was to some extent due to the heritage of the Soviet Union; however, it was also due to the poverty and isolation in which Armenia found herself after independence. One would like to say that filling in these gaps—the lack of complete language skills (listening and speaking); the lack of a practice-orientation; the lack of a dedicated aim towards teaching—was at least partially responsible for motivating the participants to continue their education through the TEFL Certificate programme. To some extent this may be true; however, to a greater extent this perspective is retrospective rather than prospective. The critical stance appeared when the participants were in a position to contrast the two programmes, that is, after they had begun their TEFL Certificate programme. In other words, it was not until the participants noticed the difference between their two types of education that they became aware of what they had been and were being exposed to. The critical stance, in this case with an evaluative component, rests upon comparison in this case.

Beliefs about (Western) TEFL Certificate Language Education

Before being in a position to recognize the contrasts between the two programmes, some of the participants had assumed that the TEFL Certificate programme, like their English language undergraduate programmes, would focus on English as a language. Lusine wrote,

I thought the TEFL programme was the only one that deals with language directly and I wanted to improve my language proficiency. This was the only objective (and I think a lot of applicants to the programme, especially the young ones, have a very similar objective)... (I4Q3).

In fact, the TEFL Certificate programme did not directly address the language needs of its students. The only course that did consider language directly was Linguistics, which was not
at all what the participants had in mind in terms of improving their English. Potentially, it was a source of dissatisfaction. All of the participants (although not all of the students who took the TEFL Certificate programme) had studied Linguistics previously. Other than Chomsky, the course essentially duplicated familiar ground. Interestingly, most of the participants and other TEFL certificate programme students did not object to this, in part because it ensured good grades, in part because they liked the instructor, but also in part because they liked the way it was taught. This point—the interest generated by the way TEFL Certificate courses were taught, as well as their content—will be returned to later, just below and then again in the discussion of teaching practices in Chapter Five. Briefly, however, it needs to be held beside the participants’ belief that by having studied so much grammar the participants had learned how to teach grammar. Together, these comments suggest an important influence in their pedagogical beliefs: the participants’ personal language learning experiences.

In summary, while the participants acknowledged that their English had improved naturally through exposure to native speakers and course reading and writing requirements, they nonetheless had entered the programme with the idea that their language needs would be more directly addressed. To some extent this was a source of dissatisfaction, at least early in the programme, although it lessened as ‘the objectives became clear’ (Irina, I4Q1). Similarly, Lusine wrote, ‘I can’t say I was unhappy about this discrepancy. Once I started the programme I really became very interested in what I was doing’ (I4Q3). What they were doing was learning how to teach English, the topic of the next section.

Beliefs about (Western) TEFL Certificate Language Teaching Education

The TEFL Certificate programme was considered by the participants to be much more practical than their undergraduate educations. However, the orientation to practice was not the only positive factor that the participants discussed. Indeed, several mentioned the theoretical benefit. Lusine wrote that the TEFL Certificate programme gave her the ‘theoretical background’ to understand what one of her undergraduate English teachers had been trying to do with her forays into CLT techniques (Olp14). It also led her to understand that theory could be based on research rather than ideology. Nune, Zara, and Hasmik also pointed out that the TEFL Certificate programme offered them an opportunity to learn about current research.
This reference to current research is important as a contrast to the rejection of the ‘theory overload’ of the participants’ undergraduate programme. All of the participants discussed the new knowledge (as well as the new skills) that they acquired in the TEFL Certificate programme. Nune referred to ‘the lack of many things’ in Armenia that were addressed by the TEFL Certificate programme (OIp7). Zara was more specific:

...for years we had all these old books. 1990s and we were having books published in the 1960s and 1970s. But it was time to have something new and we didn’t have all those things. And when I came [to Western University] it was a shock to see how many new things there are. And I was unaware of any of them (OIp17-18).

Several participants referred to Psycholinguistics and Psychology in the Classroom as a source of information about language learning theories and, in particular, information on how individual factors affect language learning. ‘It was really surprising...really important’, as Irina put it (OIp5). Zara explained why, writing that ‘it gave me new insight into the psychology of teaching and learning, different learning styles and strategies, which was completely new information for me at the time’ (I7Q3). Apparently the course enabled the participants to become aware of something that had gone previously unnoticed: students are individuals and therefore differ. In contrast, Irina described how as undergraduate students ‘we were like a group. We weren’t considered as persons, different individuals...our personal characteristics were not considered’ (OIp10).

Having come to notice and be aware, the participants were then in a position to exercise control, as the following two examples indicate. Varsenik also explained that the course taught her ‘to treat the students as individuals; and not only that, but there are some strategies and ways of learning...’ (OIp5). She gave an example of how she used this knowledge with one of her private language students:

I asked her about way of learning...how did she learn computer programming for instance, and in that way I found out she was an independent learner and I tried to give something she could accomplish, she could complete, individually (OIp6).

Zara also described how she made use of information on individual learning factors with a student:

For example, a student approached me and told that she was writing all new words in a vocabulary and then tried to memorize them but with no result. So, I figured out that writing and memorization weren’t good strategies in this case because they did not match her learning style. I told her not to memorize the words in isolation but to try to learn them in a context, to make up sentences with them and not to write new words unless she was sure that she knows the old ones...On the other hand, I have
encountered students who pick up the words from the first explanation and are able to keep them in mind a long time (I6Q4).

Thus these examples suggest that declarative knowledge of theoretical information provided by the course enabled the participants to notice, develop awareness of, and exercise control over a feature of their experience that had previously gone unnoticed.

Participants also singled out Curriculum and Course Design as providing new and important theoretical information. In particular, some participants mentioned learning about syllabus design and needs analysis. In fact the mere idea of a syllabus had been unfamiliar to them, so that simply receiving them for their courses, even before they learned about them in Curriculum Design, was ‘eye-opening’ (Irina OIp4). Nune, for example, commented that the TEFL Certificate programme instilled in her the idea that ‘it is very important to have a syllabus, something which we don’t have for our textbooks’, explaining that for some school subjects, notably math and Armenian, there was a syllabus, whereas in English ‘every teacher plans her lesson by herself’ (OIp8). Nune indicated that this was a change from Soviet times, when even for English ‘no variation of the syllabus’ was allowed (OIp8).

This is particularly interesting because it suggests that Nune knew about syllabi in some way, but simply did not think about them as relevant to her own teaching. Her comments imply that she must have followed a syllabus in her early years of teaching, for example; and as a student she was certainly aware of the difficulties her favourite teacher had faced in trying to go beyond the syllabus. But it was not until the course explicitly presented the syllabus as matter for consideration that Nune became aware of it in a way that enabled her to act upon it herself. Again we have what appears to be an example of how declarative knowledge of theoretical information enables noticing, awareness, and ultimately control.

Nune’s awareness, furthermore, had a critical element to it. As has already been pointed out, Nune thought that a syllabus was important. On the other hand, she also believed that a rigid syllabus (like the Soviet syllabus her teacher had tried to circumvent) had ‘some bad points’ (OIp8), suggesting that a certain balance between a required syllabus and no syllabus needed to be struck. This is significant in that it shows a genuinely critical stance that does not simply accept or reject a position without thought. It is also significant in that Nune connected implementing the curriculum through a planned syllabus of her own with doing needs analysis in
her own classroom. Finding out about individual student needs and interests was a part of the balance:

First of all now I get acquainted with the class. Who are the students? I just try to find out the backgrounds of the students, what they like, what they dislike, what they would like to do in the classes, what questions they have for me. And the first hour or two of class are just devoted to some kind of investigation (Olp12).

The value of needs analysis was underlined by other participants who discussed how they incorporated this idea into their own practices. Varsenik, for example, developed the curriculum for a private business training centre by creating questionnaires ‘asking the kinds of needs and doing some needs analysis’ of the clients (Olp9). Lusine described how ‘I just did a little survey at the beginning of the term’ (I2C). In these examples the participants show themselves making connections between different sources of knowledge: two different formal courses, their own ‘group’ learning experiences, and their own teaching situations. By making these connections they both exercise control and act autonomously.

Both of these courses, interestingly, were categorized by the participants as theoretical rather than practical, and both were at least partially taught in the more traditional, knowledge-transmission style. Thus it appears that it is not just the theory or teaching style or even the underlying teaching model about which the participants feel positively or negatively, but also the knowledge which they are able—or unable—to gain from the theory and through the teaching style or underlying model. In other words, either the TEFL Certificate programme courses made explicit links between theory and practice, or the participants found themselves able to do so—or perhaps both. Nune in particular described herself as trying to relate the theoretical knowledge she heard about in the TEFL Certificate programme with her practices.

...I came home...and tried to develop all these even though it wasn’t obligatory to...I just did simultaneously so, I heard [the] lectures, I came into my classroom, and I tried to develop this. And this [was] practice and [that was] some theories (Olp11).

This is an example of taking the idea of testing of ‘provisional specifications’ (Ellis, 1997a) to heart, albeit in a very informal way.

Nonetheless, the participants most frequently mentioned learning about teaching methods and techniques as the kind of practical knowledge they gained from the TEFL Certificate programme. One would then expect that the Methods course, which presented a number of different methods, but certainly focused on communicative language teaching, would
have been described as one of the most influential courses. Surprisingly, the Methods course was the most controversial of the courses described by the participants. While some of the participants spoke or wrote about how much they learned from it, others did not agree. Both Nune and Zara described it very positively. Nune commented specifically on the textbook, suggesting that

…all our English teachers should read this…. It’s a sum up of all the activities which are communication lessons, grammar lessons, all activities which are needed for every lesson (Olp7).

She also wrote that the course ‘was full of many useful concepts’ (I4Q1). Zara wrote, ‘this is one of the core courses for every future teacher’ (I7Q3). She described it as ‘really practical’ (Olp19). However, Zara also felt that some of the material was familiar from her undergraduate Practical Pedagogy course because ‘in some basic concepts I think they are the same’ (I3Q2), although she appreciated the very different approach:

Methodologies was not a new discipline for me but rather the approach was different. The methodology I had before was somewhat boring and seemed irrelevant.... At [Western University]…I acquired a lot of new information in the field that was completely new for me (I7Q3).

Others were not so tolerant of either the similarity or the approach. Hasmik, for example, said that she had covered the same material as an undergraduate, and so ‘nothing was gained from it’ (Olp6). Irina also found little of merit, although at least partly because of the way it was taught, through student presentations rather than instructor presentations, which made her feel ‘we weren’t taught anything exactly’ (Olp5). The fact that Nune mentioned activities which could be used, while Zara mentioned relevance, suggest that those who appreciated the course did so because they saw how to make use of it in the classroom.

Such vision did not become practice easily. Lusine describes the effort that could be involved in trying to practice as skills CLT techniques learned as knowledge.

When I went back to teaching...I would do pair work with my students. Well, I mean it sounds so nice, it's so encouraged in TESOL, TEFL textbooks, [but it] doesn't seem to work really. That was probably one of the first challenges after going back to teaching after [the TEFL Certificate programme]. But then I had to analyze the whole situation. They were not talking about a particular classroom, that's something I didn't consider when I did the pair work. I didn't consider my students' mentality, their previous learning experience.... So I thought, what is happening here? And I understood that first of all they'd never done any pair work so they don't see the value in what they're doing, and second maybe I wasn't clear enough in my instructions. I said, 'get in pairs, do this', but I didn't actually model what they are supposed to do (Olp15).
Here Lusine describes her struggle to implement a technique that made sense as an idea in a textbook in the reality of her own classroom. She tested the technique by analyzing what happened, hypothesizing about why it happened, and then determining what to do next as a test of the hypothesis. This suggests the amount and kind of critical acumen involved in applying ‘ready-made general solutions’ to actual classrooms (Zahorik, 1986, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993, p.207). Rather than being a passive recipient of a technique that straightforwardly transferred to the classroom, Lusine discovered that she first had to understand her class and then had to find a way to engage the class with the technique. This meant involving the class as active participants, respecting their own perspective by offering explanations for them to consider, as well as ‘translating’ the technique through clear instructions and modelling.

There is also an example of how practicality by itself was not enough to make a course appear valuable. During one year of the TEFL Certificate programme the participants had a Materials Portfolio course in which they developed materials. Although this would appear to be the most practical of all the courses, none of the participants in this study who took it thought well of it. Varsenik wrote, ‘First of all, it is not very important. Secondly, I have not learned very much from that course’ (I4Q1). Hasmik thought it wasted class time: ‘We’ spend our class hours on collecting materials, which we could easily do at home’ (I4Q1). It is difficult to offer an explanation of why the participants felt this way without over-interpreting the data. However, another comment made by one of the participants expressed concern that they were not offered as many teaching hours for their tuition dollar as students in other programmes (Zara, I4Q3). (This calculation probably did not take into account the fact that some of the courses in other programmes were short courses, e.g., four weeks instead of twelve; perhaps it also did not take into account the ‘extra’ semester of practicum teaching.) This suggests that perhaps there were certain expectations by which courses and instructors were judged. Getting one’s money’s worth was expected. Just as a course could be overly theoretical, it could also be overly practical; just as an instructor could appear distant and even despotic by presenting herself as an expert with knowledge to convey, she could also appear lackadaisical and uninvolved by not presenting herself as an expert with knowledge to convey. The participants expected their courses to provide them with knowledge and their instructors to ‘do’ something to provide them
with that knowledge. Hence Irina’s dissatisfaction with a course that relied on student rather
than instructor presentations, described previously in this section.

Courses that covered teaching the four skills were perceived as most influential on the
participants’ teaching because ‘they were very practical…It’s a very authentic approach’
(Hasmik, OIp5). She explained,

These courses served to me as a guide to how to teach language skills. They contained
a lot of practical exercises to demonstrate how [to] teach effectively. Here are worth
mentioning the presentations and mini-lesson we did after covering the relevant part of
the course. The teacher and peer feedback contributed to the usefulness of the
coursework (I7Q3)

Lusine wrote in a similar vein.

The activities we did were very practical, hands-on. Usually we had assigned readings
for each topic we were discussing, then the instructor would illustrate the theoretical
implications with real classroom activities and talk about real classroom experiences,
we had to write papers, do research, conduct model lessons, do presentations, develop
our own activities (I4Q1).

In particular, the Speaking and Listening course was perceived to be useful, if only
because the participants had little to no exposure to speaking and listening previously—neither
as language students nor as pedagogy students. For example, Irina wrote it was valuable
‘because teachers in Armenia don’t pay any attention to listening’ (Olp2). Most of them focused
on the practical teaching advice they received in Speaking and Listening. Irina, for example,
said the most influential course was

Speaking and Listening because we had not only theory, but we also had some
opportunities to practice everything we learned. Because we had mini-lessons, real
lessons. We were divided into groups and we taught like a real class…and then [the
instructor] videotaped us and then he showed us the tape, then told our mistakes or our
good things…And this was really helpful (Olp2).

Of particular importance is that, in contrast to their Soviet undergraduate education, the
participants describe clear links being made between (local) theory and practices, as Lusine
and Irina both explicitly mention.

Hasmik also discussed how teaching listening has changed since her time as a student,
mentioning changes in Armenia outside the classroom that have influenced teaching.

When I was a learner we didn’t have cassettes at home. And then we were exposed to
some cassettes but all the dialogues were artificial, you know it was just based on the
grammar we covered. Maybe it gave us something, some understanding, learning
about use, but it was not authentic use. But now I can for example include CNN in my
listening comprehension classes because everybody has a TV at home. And so we can watch CNN and I can develop listening strategies and I can say, ‘Listen selectively. Listen to the main points. Listen just for general information’ (Olp6).

Again a participant shows that techniques do not simply transfer from the student-teacher’s classroom to the teacher’s classroom, but involve an active role for the teacher in recognizing and interpreting how to implement techniques in feasible ways.

The Teaching Reading and Writing course was also perceived to be useful. Hasmik, for example, wrote ‘I didn’t have any idea reading could have so many skills. I knew that this is a piece of reading, this is a passage, and you just are going to read it and answer the questions’ (Olp6). In both courses the participants appreciated the opportunity to develop a sense of the ‘how’ of teaching—the skills involved—as well as the ‘what’—or knowledge—of teaching.

Another feature several participants commented on was that they learned both how to write as well as how to teach writing while in the TEFL Certificate programme, although apparently this was at least as much from being required to write assignments as it was from the writing skills course. Lusine mentioned, ‘I learnt writing in English there! Before I had never realized how important a skill this is for communication’ (I4Q3). Varsenik referred to the research paper assignment for one of her courses: ‘I remember exactly what I learned. I learned how to write a thesis’ (Olp4). Of particular interest is that the participants felt they were acquiring different skills in different ways—not only from being explicitly presented with information and activities on how to teach, but also from having to speak and listen, read and write themselves, as well as from observing the way their instructors taught. Thus the participants were not only recipients of the content being taught (regardless of the teaching style), and the practices they engaged in to complete the courses; they were also actively taking notice of and being influenced by the way they were being taught. Irina addressed this most explicitly in saying that she learned by observing the instructors:

My experience at [Western University], the methods I learned there, the way you talked to us, to be present at your lessons, that was really interesting, but if you consider me as an observer. I was a student and an observer, yes. So that was really interesting to know how you teach, to know the American way of thinking so…. When we write for example in Russian or in Armenian we don’t have those strict things, like we don’t need to have introduction and paragraph and conclusion. So that was something new for us. So I understand that Americans literally think that way, so everything they say usually has introduction and paragraphs and conclusion. So that was really helpful and it helped me to communicate with Americans (Olp9).
Another concrete example she gives is, ‘I could say my opinion about the thing. And it was wonderful because our instructors listened to us very carefully’ (OIp7). When asked, ‘As a teacher do you think you do this?’ Irina responded, ‘Yeah. I listen very carefully’ (OIp7). Lusine and Zara also commented very favourably on the way TEFL Certificate instructors listened to them and acknowledged their ideas, and as will be shown in Chapter Five, both have incorporated similar attitudes and practices in their own classrooms.

Learning teaching skills through experience and observation will be discussed more explicitly in the Chapter Five. But next, the practicum course will be discussed.

**Beliefs about (Western) TEFL Certificate Practicum Course**

As in their undergraduate programme, so in their graduate program: the participants found the Practicum course to be the most practical. Unlike their undergraduate Practicum, however, all of the participants were very positive about their TEFL Certificate Practicum. In particular, the aims and the feedback appear to be the greatest differences between them.

As was described above, the participants felt that the aim of their undergraduate Practicum was to ensure they followed a textbook-based lesson plan in the ‘right’ way. The aim of the TEFL Certificate Practicum was perceived differently. Rather than following a textbook or another teacher’s ‘expert’ plan, the participants felt that the TEFL Certificate Practicum offered them the chance to plan for themselves. They also felt that they were expected to try new methods and techniques and materials. Writing lesson plans also meant they had to consider how classroom activities related to teaching objectives. Hasmik, for example, described one of her practicum lessons in detail:

The lesson objective was to teach the students ‘Future: be going to’ as well as time expressions….I looked through the material I was going to teach during the lesson. I found some topics for speaking related to the lesson objective. I presented the new material by the Direct and the Inductive method…by bringing different examples [in English]…. When the students understood what I was trying to explain, I explained the material in Armenian and had them write down the grammar rule. To consolidate the material I had them read the text…., after which I involved them in the activity non-stop speaking on the topic ‘What am I going to do next year’ (I2Q2).

Here Hasmik describes what appears to be a rather self-conscious attempt to be sure to have a clear objective, to relate activities to the objective, to practice different techniques, and to add something (the non-stop speaking activity) that was not in the required textbook, thus displaying
what she had gained from both the Methodology and the Materials Portfolio courses. (To clarify one point in Hasmik’s description: the reference to explaining and writing out the rule in Armenian was to make up for the fact the students did not have a textbook or reference grammar to take home. Thus they copied most lessons into copybooks for home practice. It can be imagined how this affected time management in the classroom.)

Feedback was another major difference. Rather than being criticized or marked down for making mistakes, the participants felt that the TEFL Certificate Practicum gave them a chance to recognize problems and find solutions themselves, but with the bonus of having an instructor with whom to discuss problems and identify possible solutions. All of the participants could cite specific lessons they learned from the Practicum. Hasmik wrote that her mentor pointed out ‘I didn’t give my students much time to express themselves’ (I2Q1). Irina wrote, ‘I was told I expected too much from my students…I began to plan lessons that were very clear and simple’ (I2Q6). Lusine realized that ‘Instructions are very crucial for the students’ successful performance in the classroom’ (I2Q6). Nune described becoming aware of how she selected students for oral responses (personal communication). Varsenik learned ‘Sometimes you think that time is enough for doing a lot of things, but you can be wrong’ (I3Q5). Zara wrote ‘I started to listen to my students more attentively. I tried to give them as much time as they needed to express their ideas freely. I also learned to give them ‘wait time’ to think about a question’ (I2Q4). These comments suggest that feedback in the Practicum had two elements: one, the mentor provided feedback, and two, the feedback was to pay attention to student feedback, thus echoing Eraut on the necessity of feedback to effective practice (1994).

The participants also felt that the Practicum gave them an opportunity to recognize and develop their own teaching style and beliefs. The self-reflective focus of the Practicum becomes evident in one of Zara’s comments, in which she describes observation as a reflection in a mirror.

Thanks to observations I have seen my weak and strong sides. It seems you watch yourself in the mirror and try to put things right. When I am getting dressed I am looking in the mirror from time to time and eliminating all unnecessary things, trying to look perfect before leaving the house. Observation is very much like this procedure, the more you are observed the more perfect your teaching becomes (I2Q6).

It is interesting that the image concerns removing rather than adding, pointing to the typical novice fear of not having enough material prepared for class. It also hints at awareness of the
classroom as a place where not every exchange can be planned, but where room must be left for genuine, contingent interaction (van Lier, 2002), something else Zara addresses that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

All of the participants attributed learning these lessons (and others) to the feedback they received—and especially the way they received it. They mentioned having the opportunity to discuss the lesson with the observer and, even more importantly to several of them, being given written comments on which to reflect and respond. For example, Zara wrote, ‘They wrote their comments and later I had to write my own comments for them. Now I can say that it was very useful, because I still have those notes’ (I2Q6). Lusine explained in more detail how she made use of her practicum notes.

Another thing I appreciated very much was that after the oral discussion [the observer] would give me the written report of her observation, which were of enormous help, for I would go back to the report and see what else I could have done or what I could have done better and whether there was any progress in my teaching style/methods (I2Q1). What is interesting is how these two participants valued the opportunity to be able to return to their lesson, as captured by written accounts, in order to reflect on it. Other participants also mentioned that they had saved these accounts of their teaching.

One factor that appeared to distinguish the TEFL Certificate observation discussions from the participants’ undergraduate observation discussions was being able to explain their own perspective on the lesson, rather than being expected to accept the observer’s views. Nune, for example, said that ‘the teacher may be unfolded thoroughly’ (I3Q7) through her TEFL observation discussions. Lusine recounted being asked to explain ‘why’.

What struck me most was that [the observer] would always start with asking about my reaction on the lesson first, what I liked, didn’t like, what would change and of course, the most important question, why. Only then would she make her suggestions (I2Q1).

This focus on self-reflection as well as observer reaction offered the participants an opportunity to learn how to reflect and analyze such that they could eventually internalize the process. It also offered them the opportunity to recognize and value their own ‘insider’ expertise. Hasmik remembered explaining to her practicum instructor why she had to focus on whole class grammar explanations.

Of course, after the lesson I had a discussion with my observer. Overall she liked the lesson. But in her opinion the lesson had more theory than practice…. But the trouble is that the students want to know about the grammar as much as possible…. [The students] find that if all students pay equal fees they should get equal time during the lesson. Thus that’s why I don’t think I would change anything in this lesson. But if I
were teaching in a state school not a private one, I would let the students practice to their hearts’ content (I2Q3).

The practicum observers were not always aware of these kinds of constraints, but as the above example suggests, the participants felt their observers would listen to them. Thus despite the expectation that new methods and techniques would be tried out in the practicum, the participants also felt that their reasons for not doing so would be heard. This sort of context-sensitive mentoring between new and experienced teachers, along with articulation and reflection, address Freeman’s suggestions for teacher education (2002).

The images used by one of the participants—of seeing a reflection of herself—suggest that perhaps the importance of the post-observation discussions is not only in what the observer says as in what the participant finds within herself, whether through her own thoughts and words or the observer’s thoughts and words. And it is finding what is within herself that leads to the sense of self-reliance and the ability to self-evaluate, that is, the internalization of the process so that it can occur not only deliberatively, but also rapidly. Lusine wrote,

These observations were crucial to my teaching, because I think it was the first time I felt both self-reliant as a teacher and at the same time self-critical. I systematized my work habits and understood the importance of the ‘why’ question. From then on I’ve turned into a notorious ‘why-asker’ (I2Q6).

In a sense, what the participants learned in their TEFL Certificate practicum was that they themselves were a source of information for their teaching practices. In other words, they began to develop a sense of themselves as autonomous teachers that is necessary for developing a personal practical theory of teaching. The participants’ recognition of themselves as teachers in this light began at different times and places, but appears to have crystallized for them in reflections on their teaching. It is in these reflections that they consider alternative choices that require autonomous action if they are to be realized. Useful reflection, therefore, requires autonomy, for without autonomy the ability to act is constrained.

Summary of Beliefs about (Western) TEFL Certificate Education

In summary, part of the answer to the second research question is that both theoretical information and individual perception and reflection, based on experiences in the TEFL Certificate programme, are influences on the personal practical theories of the participants. Part of the answer to the first research question is that the participants developed their personal
practical theories through the transmission of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, the application of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, and the interpretation of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. Furthermore, tacit knowledge about teaching from learning experiences also contributed to the development of personal practical theories.

The participants found new information, whether it was practice-oriented or not, to be most important in their TEFL Certificate programme. That much of the new information was perceived to be practical had a great deal to do with the perceived lack of practical knowledge in the participants' undergraduate programs. But practical alone was not enough, as can be seen from the participants' comments about the Materials Portfolio course. Even rather theoretical information, some of it from source theories, was valued for providing up-to-date information about new areas of inquiry. Furthermore, many of the participants found their teaching practices influenced by some of the most theoretical information they studied in the programme, as is suggested by their examples of how they used knowledge about individual learning factors and needs analysis in teaching practices. Thus the difference between 'theoretical' and 'practical' is not the basis of the participants' perceptions of course usefulness, despite their initial general comments regarding the merits of the two programmes. In fact, it appears that a course was regarded positively if it covered information, whether theoretical or practical, whether of knowledge or skills, that was perceived to be useful for teaching. Such information might be perceived to be useful because it was a practice or technique that appeared to be transferable to the classroom (as all the participants said about the skills courses), or because it was a local theory that appeared relevant to teaching (as Zara and Nune said about Methods), or because it was new information from a source theory that could be related to teaching or learning (as most of the participants said about Psycholinguistics and Psychology in the Classroom). Finally, in the case of the Practicum course, it was valued not only because it was an opportunity to try out new teaching methods and techniques, but also because it revealed a new source of information: the teacher herself.

Thus the TEFL Certificate programme appears to have offered learning opportunities for the participants according to different teaching models. The skills courses were perceived by the participants as offering specific practices that they could first try out during mini-lessons and in the Practicum course, and then later use in their own classrooms. This was especially true of
the Speaking and Listening course, where the participants had little to no personal experience. To some extent the Methods course and Materials Portfolio course also offered sample activities and materials that could be used in the classroom. In these cases, the participants appear to have treated the TEFL Certificate courses as a source of ‘ready-made specific solutions’ (Zahorik, 1986, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993); that is, the participants treated at least some of the information from the courses on the behavioural model of teaching. Activities and materials were simply transferred from one context to another, although sometimes they were adapted to better suit a particular class. Such adaptation is, of course, one of the ways in which acquiring information as a transmissible product is not necessarily a passive and uncritical process, as discussed in Chapter Two as well as above.

Not all the information from these courses was treated in this way, however. Sometimes the participants described taking a more general concept and then adapting it to the local situation. From the Methods and Practicum courses in particular, and the TEFL Certificate programme in general, all of the participants tried to incorporate central features of the local theory presented to them, communicative language teaching, such as promoting interaction and meaningful communication, by trying pair and group work, information gap activities, and student-generated discussions. In these ways information from these same courses was treated on the cognitive model of teaching, with ‘ready-made solutions to general problems’ (Zahorik, 1986, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993). Again, however, there is an active and critical element in the way these concepts were adapted by the participants to specific classes; the process that Lusine described for instituting pair work involved considerable analysis.

Finally, the participants used theoretical information from the Curriculum and Course Design course and the Psycholinguistics and Psychology in the Classroom course to develop different attitudes towards their classes and their students. The participants described how they try to determine their students’ needs. The participants also talked about the ways they consider individual factors that affect the language learning of different students. In these ways the participants treated course information on the interpretive model of teaching, with ‘custom and self-made solutions’ (Zahorik, cited in Freeman and Richards, 1993).
Conclusion to Beliefs about Participants’ Language and Language Teaching Education

Because the participants found themselves able to use the information from the TEFL Certificate programme they perceived it in a somewhat different light than their undergraduate programme. In part this was due to the differences between a more general undergraduate programme with a dual aim and a more specific graduate programme with a single aim. Perhaps it is best to view the TEFL Certificate programme as complementing rather than supplanting the undergraduate programme, because it cannot be emphasized enough that the narrow aim of the TEFL Certificate programme ensured that it could provide more specific and usable information than the broader undergraduate programme. This is, of course, no criticism of the undergraduate programme: its level and one of its aims were different than that of the TEFL Certificate programme. But this does not negate the fact that the participants felt themselves to be so unprepared for what was, in fact, one of the aims of their undergraduate programme: to teach English as a foreign language. More to the point, however, are the differences between the way the participants viewed the kind of information they received in the two programmes and the way they were presented that information.

Although the participants were mostly satisfied with what information they did receive in their undergraduate programmes, especially with regard to English language structures, they also perceived it to be limited. To a certain extent it was viewed as limited by Soviet ideology, partly by the active propagation of that ideology, but mostly by the failure to present a wider—and more current—information base because of that ideology. It should be acknowledged that the poverty and relative isolation of Armenia were also perceived to be factors limiting the availability and currency of information. The undergraduate programme was also limited by being founded on a transmission model of education in which, at least to some extent, the participants appeared to feel that they were passive recipients of knowledge, much of which appeared to be not directly applicable to classroom practices. These limitations left the participants feeling unprepared for teaching. Nonetheless, some of the participants appear to have absorbed a great deal of their beliefs from their undergraduate education, in particular about classroom learning and grammar teaching, as the next chapter will show.

The TEFL Certificate programme, on the other hand, was perceived by the participants to be much less limited, mostly because it provided much more current information directly
related to teaching English as a foreign language. Furthermore, they appeared to feel that they were active participants in their education, whether they perceived their TEFL education on a transmission model, a cognitive model, or an interpretive model. As active participants, they found themselves able to use information from the programme in their classrooms, even when it was not directly transferable. Thus the participants felt prepared for teaching.

Nune captured what each of the participants, through words and practices, revealed about the self-development of teachers and the complex inter-relationships between teachers and learners, beliefs and practices, and the classroom (and I would add its context). She wrote:

...a teacher should know his or her value, inner potential on which something should be developed. But what is this, what is unfolded, you're in the experience, during the relationship, during the collaboration, in the room doing, in there, in the classroom (Olp19).

What these teachers believe about the learners in this relationship, ‘during the collaboration’, is the subject of the next chapter. What knowledge and skills the participants gained and how they use them in their classrooms will be covered in the next chapter. In addressing these topics several themes briefly alluded to in the previous section will be picked up and considered more thoroughly in light of the participants’ actual classroom practices as well as their espoused beliefs and self-descriptions of those practices.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at some of the espoused beliefs of the participants about language and education in general as well as their formal language and language teaching education. The participants’ beliefs appear to have been influenced by the sociocultural context of living through their country’s political and economic transition. Personal values, personal experiences, the sociocultural context, and theoretical and practical knowledge from formal education appear to be possible influences on the beliefs that constitute the personal practical theories of the participants, thus answering the second research question. The next chapter will look at whether these beliefs are reflected in classroom practices, the third research question.
CHAPTER FIVE
Espoused and Inferred Beliefs about Practices

Introduction

In the previous chapter the participants’ espoused beliefs about language, education, and their formal pedagogical educations were discussed. Some of their beliefs about the perceived impact of these beliefs on teaching were also briefly mentioned to illustrate the content of the participants’ formal pedagogical education. This chapter will take a much closer look at the participants’ espoused beliefs by considering them in light of their actual teaching practices. Furthermore, by looking at practices, other beliefs may be able to be inferred. Therefore this chapter answers the third research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’

The classroom data in this section comes from five of the participants: Zara, Lusine, Nune, Hasmik, and Varsenik, as summarized below in Table 6. Permission was granted for audio recordings to be made of four of the participants’ classroom teaching, and data from these four (as noted in Table 6) is based on both the audio recordings and field notes. For one of the participants, Varsenik, the data is based on field notes only. As stated previously, one of the participants, Irina, was unemployed when the data was gathered, and so while her beliefs about her classroom practices will be discussed, they have not been corroborated with classroom observation data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Teaching and Observation Situation</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hasmik</td>
<td>at home private tutoring; undergraduate student</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusine</td>
<td>private university classroom; graduate students</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nune</td>
<td>state school classroom; secondary students</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varsenik</td>
<td>state tertiary institute classroom; undergraduate students</td>
<td>notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>private language programme classroom; adults</td>
<td>audio; notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Teaching and Observation Situations and Data Collection

The data for this section was originally coded as described in Chapter Three. That is, like all of the data, it was coded twice, once horizontally for all of the data for each interview, and again vertically for all of the data for each participant. These codes were analyzed into categories. These categories are: how students learn, how students learn grammar, how the participant learned English, motivation, styles, personality, good teaching, teaching style, teacher qualities, teacher responsiveness, ideal class, making progress as a teacher, conscious
and unconscious decision-making, how to teach, corrections, program design, activities, grammar, noticing and planning, on-line decision making, and reflecting.

The data that generated categories relevant to this section, that is, espoused beliefs about teaching, was later reanalyzed and recoded in light of the analysis of the other categories (forming Chapter Four) and the classroom observation transcripts. This reanalysis generated more precise categories. For example, the original categories of ‘teacher responsiveness’, ‘how to teach’, ‘activities’, ‘grammar’, ‘corrections’, and ‘on-line decision making’ were subsumed under the broader category of ‘teaching practices’. These codes were then reanalyzed into the new categories of ‘context’, ‘on-line decision making’, ‘timing’, ‘student-student interaction’, ‘student-teacher interaction’, ‘student participation’, ‘method’, ‘activities’, ‘translation’, ‘grammar’, ‘questioning’, ‘speaking’, ‘listening’, ‘reading’, ‘writing’, ‘feedback’. The new skill-based categories as well as ‘method’ developed as I reflected on the category ‘courses’ from Chapter Four and the participants’ references to the impact of specific courses on their practices. The new categories ‘student-student interaction’, ‘teacher-student interaction’, ‘student participation’ and ‘questioning’ emerged after analysis of the observation transcripts revealed very different patterns among the participants’ practices. Another example is that the original category ‘reflecting’ was re-named ‘post-teaching’ and then re-divided into ‘post-teaching (emotional reflecting)’ ‘post-teaching (reflecting for understanding)’, ‘post-teaching (reflecting for improvement)’ and ‘post-teaching (student evaluation)’, which I recognized as separate categories after reflecting on how I had recognized as separate the Chapter Four categories of ‘practicum effects (emotional)’, practicum effects (on students)’ and practicum effects (practical).

Thus the data analysis was essentially reflexive, with codes forming categories, and categories informing recoding, which in turn led to recategorizing the new codes. Therefore the analysis of the data for this chapter is not fully inductive, but partially deductive, as discussed in Chapter Three.

As mentioned above, much of the data for this chapter is based on classroom observation transcripts. Because it is the content and not the conversation, interaction, or discourse features of the data that are being analyzed, I will provide a broad transcription of the interactions, as described in Appendix B.
This chapter will be organized around the beliefs of the participants. Examples of how these beliefs are illustrated in teaching practices will be excerpted from the classroom observation transcripts. The main categories are:
- Beliefs about the Aims of Language Teaching;
- Beliefs about Learning;
- Beliefs about Teaching.

**Beliefs about the Aims of Language Teaching**

This section discusses the participants’ beliefs about the aims of teaching. These aims are related to the participants’ beliefs about language and education in post-Soviet Armenia. Thus this section shows how experiences which inform the beliefs that shape personal practical theories are then reflected in classroom practices. It therefore offers part of the answer to the third research question on how personal practical theories are related to classroom practices, as well as linking this answer to the answer of the second research question on the role of influences on personal practical theories.

Language teachers teach language; English language teachers teach the English language. However, as might be expected from individuals with the strong enlightenment views on education that were described in Chapter Four, the participants of this study have much more to say on their aims than merely this. This section is based on the categories ‘what to teach’, ‘why teach English’, ‘making progress as a teacher’, ‘perfect lessons’, ‘objectives versus activities’, ‘good teaching’, ‘the role of education for individuals’, ‘the role of education for society’, ‘changes in views of education’, and ‘student expectations’. Many of these categories were used in Chapter Four in the discussions of beliefs about language and education.

This is not to say that the participants do not see teaching the English language as their main aim. Nune wrote that her goal for her students was ‘to take with me some of them to a wonderful and mysterious world of English’ (I1Q2). More prosaically, Lusine and Zara both mentioned sharing their knowledge of English with their students. Hasmik, Varsenik, and Irina all felt that the goal of language teaching was in the outcomes of students. Varsenik put it, ‘Good teaching has good results’ (I3Q4), and Irina wrote, ‘The more the progress, the better the teaching can be considered’ (I3Q4).
But for some of the participants teaching English was also recognized as a means to other, nonlinguistic ends. Some of these ends focused on students, such as offering opportunities for them to expand their knowledge, develop skills, and acquire values. Others were focused on the teacher developing a sense of herself. Zara came very close to tying all of these ideas together with the following statement:

Well, I think that for me the most important thing is, how to say this, is to make people see your point, to feel yourself as a teacher, and to feel the things that you are doing. ..... I mean students should see who you are, not like in terms of things that you teach them. Like teacher in a broader sense (Olp25).

The more limited sense of the aims of teaching is implicit in Zara’s words in the references to making people see your point, and is also implicit in her rejection of teaching as limited to the things you teach. The broader sense of the aims of teaching points to students; but it also points, very strongly, to the teacher’s image of herself as a teacher and her understanding of her practices as a teacher. These broader aims of teaching—students’ non-linguistic knowledge, students’ critical thinking skills, students’ moral values—will each be addressed.

Nune and Hasmik both mentioned the importance of English for their students to acquire knowledge of other subjects. Nune specifically mentioned that ‘it will help to enrich their knowledge about other nations’ culture, history, customs’. Furthermore, it would help students ‘be connected with the outer world, to know outer information’ (Olp2). Behind such comments is the image of an isolated and maligned Armenia, an image which has mytho-historical origins and forms a part of the Armenian self-image (Shnirelman, 2001), but which also has a material basis, especially in the years of closed borders and extreme poverty. It is also connected with another metaphor, that of a closed society. Several of the participants commented on the reciprocal influences of the independence of Armenia and the spread of the English language (described in Chapter Four), one of them being Lusine.

Lusine explicitly connected learning English with ‘far more global changes in the Armenian society, our turning into an open and democratic society, which emphasizes the need for being able to get a message across and being able to decipher the answer’ (11Q5). For Lusine developing critical thinking skills almost outweighs developing linguistic skills, as she reveals in the following passage:

When I teach the main thing for me is not to teach them, well...it is of course the language, but with it one thing I always try to have in the classroom is to make them be
independent thinkers, just to think for themselves and not be afraid of their ideas....

Lusine has a clear means to this end: ‘I ask questions. And like every time I ask a question I try to ask for an opinion or just ask them why’ (Olp13). In the classes which I observed, Lusine regularly did this. For example, in discussing the first drafts of an essay on ‘the Armenian Question’ (NB: The ‘Armenian Question’ is whether Armenia has the right to exist), the following exchange among Lusine and her students occurred.

1. T: ...For example you say that one of the reasons that the Armenian Question is still open is because Turkey is a more important (xx) in the international community than Armenia.
2. S: (xx)
3. T: Why?
4. S: Because they're gaining more political-
5. T: Power?
6. S: (xx)
7. S: They play a bigger role.
8. T: To do what?
9. S: For example, right now the US makes Turkish territory for their own (xx).
10. S: (xxxx)
11. S: They use a lot of military bases in Turkey.
12. S: They don't (xx) Turkey advice.
13. S: It won't mean (xx).
14. T: I agree with everything you're saying, but how is this connected to the importance of Turkey in the international community and then tie this to the Armenian Question again? OK, Turkey is an important community member. How does that affect Armenia? I don't think if Turkey or Armenia had-
15. S: [Ah, no-
16. S: [Turkey-
17. S: [It isn't clear.
18. T: Sorry. Make it clear for those that are interested in politics. If I'm just interested in the Armenian Question, like say, because I am a survivor of this act and obviously knows what's happening and I don't know about this parliament, et cetera. There should be a context you can explain (xx).
19. S: It even says here that when the French parliament passed an Armenian genocide resolution but Turkey doesn't want and would cancel any contracts with them.
20. T: Yeah.
21. S: That's why, it's not possible for them to cancel their contracts and support the resolution.
22. T: OK. So one thing that you should do when giving the reason supporting the idea always keep in mind that you support the reasons for answering that question.

This excerpt shows Lusine asking questions to guide her students to go more deeply into their ideas at turns 3 (‘Why’), 8 (‘To do what?’), and 14 (‘How does that affect Armenia?’), until one of the students at turn 21 finally answers the original ‘why’ of turn 3. The student recognizes that he has finally answered the question and confirms what he has done at turn 18, suggesting that he has recognized the importance of asking and answering ‘why’. Lusine then explicitly ties the discussion of the essay’s content to essay writing, which is the ostensible topic of the lesson. In
this way the exchange shows engagement with the content that the students wrote, and not just engagement with the ‘rules’ for writing an English language argument essay. Lusine’s practices reflect two beliefs: students should have opportunities to think critically and students should have opportunities to see how their ideas can be developed in their writing. Both of these beliefs are addressed as Lusine shifts her attention between them. Nor does Lusine simply work with examples from the students’ first drafts to illustrate support for an argument. Rather they argue the point—and much of the exchange is between the students who are discussing ideas and not essay writing, as in turns 9-13. For Lusine, such an exchange counts as evidence of her success in meeting the aims of teaching. Furthermore, developing critical thinking skills is related to Lusine’s belief that one of the goals of education in general is to help individuals forge their own path in life.

Lusine has another, more personal goal, as well. It is to pass on the lesson that she has learned living through the hardships Armenia has faced.

But I think that nowadays in Armenia as teachers we have a great reason to do, which is actually to teach the younger generation how to live. I mean it’s not just to survive, it’s like we can lose our life if we’re just thinking about survival. I think it’s high time to teach our kids how to live and just be happy with that (Olp19).

The laughter and camaraderie in Lusine’s classroom, the way class begins with everyone sharing information about concerts and exhibits and other events, the journals that students and teacher exchange among themselves to create dialogue are perhaps manifestations of this aim.

Nune also has a broader sense of the aims of teaching. She agreed that part of her duty as a teacher was to offer students opportunities to explore their moral values; this is related to her more general view that the purpose of education is to make individuals. Furthermore, exploring values was one way to meet another goal, that ‘every lesson should be connected with real life. If it’s far from life then it can’t be a lesson’ (Olp2). In a lesson with the theme ‘friendship’, Nune led the following discussion.

1. T: ...Let’s do a cluster and find out how the following criteria. Can we make friends with people in the room?
2. SS: Yes.
3. T: And what is needed in this case, what is needed if you want to make friends with people living abroad? Then what are needed for us for making friends I mean? Yes, you can go.
4. S: I think it is learning language is important.
5. T: Yes, so friends abroad. ((T begins writing students’ ideas on the board.)) What else?
7. T: Many habits.
8. S: Customs.
9. T: Customs. What else?
10. S: Their culture.
11. T: Their culture, very good.
12. S: (xx)
13. T: Yes, you can. If they have for example a special haircut it doesn’t mean we shouldn’t make friends with them. OK.
14. S: (xx)
15. T: Sorry?
16. S: To try new things.
17. T: Yes, we must try every time, we must try to do new things because we should be open to any kind of new suggestion, any kind of new thoughts. That’s why in this case it is very important also to take new suggestions.
18. S: (xx)
20. S: We must respect them.
21. T: Should be respected. OK, what else?
22. S: We shouldn’t be strict.
23. T: What?
24. S: We shouldn’t be strict in our minds.
25. T: We shouldn’t be strict in expressing our opinions.
26. S: Our opinions and respect their opinion xx.
27. T: OK, respect their opinion.
(NO1p1-2)

Nune stated that one of her aims in this activity was to help her students develop their own criteria for friendship. In the above excerpt a number of students offer ideas. These ideas were further developed by Nune when she refocused the discussion on the students themselves by concluding,

28. T: .... So when we are abroad to make friends it is very good to have a friend possessing all these qualities. We should have a look inside ourselves and find what we are for, what kind of person we are because if we don’t know what we want, what we are for, and what we can do ourselves, what is needed for ourselves to be developed, such obvious qualities, then we can’t find out what we want to see in the person, the people [we are] going to be going to have as best friends....
(NO1p5)

This is very explicit advice about discovering oneself and ones values. Nune explained her purpose for this lesson by saying, ‘I just try to make the path clear, how to develop criteria that are most important for their further lives even....’ (Olp2). Part of her purpose in doing this is her belief that her students ‘be connected with the outer world’ (Olp2) which is

Because every child should remember, every student, that he is one of the representatives of the future generation.... And right now is the foundation step for them, how to think, how to overcome the difficulties that our country has, and that’s why I create the lessons in the way so that every time the connections [between] our country and the English speaking countries [are made] (Olp6).
Nune’s practices reflect these beliefs. At turn 1 she makes explicit reference to the students’ ‘real life’ as well as providing a familiar context for the ‘outer world’ which is introduced at turn 3. The students are then given opportunities to offer their ideas. Nune’s intention is to help her students develop values that will help them, and through them their country, in the future. She addresses this intention by focusing the students’ attention on specific values they have and on how those personal values inform relationships with other people.

Furthermore, Nune also encourages her students to develop a sense of their Armenian heritage. One way I witnessed her doing this was during her school’s ‘English Week’, when students perform in English for the school, parents, and guests. One of Nune’s many contributions to it was organizing her students to act out vignettes of famous Armenian works translated into English. In this way she supported both English language skills as well as the Armenian heritage, and also made it possible for parents who had no English to appreciate their children’s performances of familiar classics of Armenian literature. This, too, is tied to Nune’s sense of her responsibility in developing her students’ sense of themselves as both individuals and Armenians.

In both of these cases it is clear that ‘nonprofessional’, personal knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) has influenced the participants’ teaching practices. They illustrate teachers determining what to do in the classroom based on why they intend to do it: to improve their students’ ability to function effectively (and autonomously) in a changing society. In Lusine’s case, her intent is that her students learn to think for themselves; in Nune’s case, her intent is that her students recognize their own values. Furthermore, both teachers connect their aims to the changes Armenia is undergoing. Thus both teachers can be seen as contributing to the construction of a new national identity (Pavlenko, 2003). In this way, general beliefs about Armenia, values about people and their social roles, as well as beliefs about how the classroom should prepare students for their futures in Armenia, all of which have helped to shape the personal practical theories of these two participants, are also seen to inform their teaching beliefs and practices.
Beliefs about Learning

This section discusses the participants’ beliefs about learning and describes the practices that are associated with those beliefs. It is, therefore, part of the answer to the third research question on the extent to which personal practical theories are reflected in classroom practices. It also is part of the answer to the second research question on the role of influences that shape personal practical theories.

It is difficult to describe the participants’ beliefs about learning without also describing their beliefs about teaching. Gathering confirming and disconfirming evidence for beliefs from classroom observations necessarily entails descriptions of their teaching practices and how these reflect their beliefs about learning. Because several of the participants did explicitly refer to learners and learning, I have attempted to follow their lead by describing their espoused beliefs. The support for these beliefs from their practices, however, relies on making inferences. As Pajares states, ‘It is unavoidable that, for purposes of investigation, beliefs must be inferred’ (1992, p. 315). To avoid making too many high-level inferences, I have tried, where possible, to use the participants’ own reflections on their practices. This is true for both areas which the participants discussed: individual differences in language learning and classroom language learning. Nonetheless, I have felt warranted in making some higher level inferences based not only on the data gathered for this research but also on my personal knowledge of the participants, the content of courses in their TEFL Certificate programme, their teaching situations, and the wider context in which they live and work from the two years I lived and worked in Armenia prior to this study.

The following categories were used in this chapter: ‘how the participants learned English’, ‘Russian/Soviet pedagogy’, ‘Western pedagogy’, ‘student differences’, ‘generational differences’, ‘ways of learning’, ‘student expectations’, ‘styles’, ‘personality’, ‘motivation’, ‘personal qualities’, ‘student-student interaction’, ‘student-teacher interaction’, and ‘questioning’. These were collapsed into two themes that will become section headings: individual learner differences and classroom language learning. Therefore this section will be organized as follows:

- Individual learner differences
  - Learning styles
Individual Learner Differences

One aspect of learners and learning which was discussed by all of the participants was individual learner differences. As Chapter Four indicated, the beliefs and practices associated with individual learner differences are almost certainly attributable to the Western University TEFL Certificate programme, which addressed second language acquisition and individual learner differences. In brief, the participants were there presented with an overview of some of the ways in which learners differ, such as age, personality (such as risk-taking), cognitive or learning style (such as field independence and dependence), and socio-psychological factors (such as motivation), hemispheric specialization, learning strategies, and other factors (such as memory) (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). In Chapter Four the participants are cited as having identified individual learner differences as some of the new theoretical information which they found particularly influential on their beliefs and practices. However, a caveat is in order. The participants were quite strong and certain in attributing their knowledge of individual learner differences to the TEFL Certificate program. This is not to say, however, that some of the practices could not also reflect both theoretical and practical information from their Soviet pedagogical background. A case can be made that Activity Theory, especially as developed by the Soviet educational psychologist Galperin and summarized in Methods of Teaching English (Rogova, 1975), is a source for some of the participants’ beliefs and practices. These will be noted where relevant. It should also be noted that Nune’s own research into Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences is also a source of her beliefs on individual learner differences.

The participants had beliefs about three areas of individual differences in particular: learning styles, personality factors, and motivation. Each of these will be dealt with in turn.

**Learning style**

Learning style describes the general way in which an individual approaches learning.
Reid (1987), for example, distinguishes between perceptual modes such as visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile learning. Others have distinguished between field-independent and field-dependent learning and analytical and holistic learning (Skehan, 1998). As Skehan points out, research in this area suggests that different styles are somewhat dispositional and possess different advantages; thus it is ‘attractive’ because it does not imply that some people are innately better learners than others (1998, p. 237). In fact, the participants did find theoretical information on learning styles to be attractive precisely because of the possibilities it offered to both learners and teachers.

All of the participants wrote or said that learners had different learning styles, and that the teacher should consider each individual in order to determine her learning style and then find ways to accommodate it. All of them felt that paying attention to learning styles led to better learning. Several mentioned that learners needed this information for themselves; Zara, for example, said she gave her students a mini-lecture on it to persuade them that they needed to take responsibility for their own learning. Hasmik wrote about how she described her own experiences to her students: ‘Very often I bring examples from my own learning experience, and teach strategies I used in my own learning’ (I6Q5). Irina and Varsenik said that they advised students individually about approaches and techniques. Interestingly, some of the participants referred to older students in particular as being aware of and amenable to information about their preferred learning styles. Zara was the most direct in pointing out how older students, like herself, preferred ‘Soviet’ or explicit learning (to be discussed in more detail below.)

Classroom observation data showed several of the participants’ sensitivity to different learning styles. For example, Hasmik’s description of herself as an analytical learner matches her detail-oriented, step-by-step teaching style (excerpted below in the section Grammar Teaching). There she has a similarly analytically-oriented student read her essay aloud and goes through each sentence, analyzing grammar and vocabulary choices in addition to the stated focus on rhetoric and development. (In a conversation with the student after class, the student explained how she had tried other tutors but chose Hasmik because of her approach.)

Visual learning was a style several participants mentioned, possibly because of its contrast to the lectures and oral examinations typical of Soviet tertiary education. Although all of the participants made use of the blackboard to visually present information, Varsenik and
Nune made extensive use of it, frequently inviting students to put information on the blackboard. Varsenik, for example, had one of the students present a vocabulary point by inviting her to make a chart on the board. Nune regularly involved students in blackboard activities, as this excerpt shows.

((On the blackboard Nune has drawn a chart with two columns, one labelled /ae/ and one labelled /ei/.)

1. T: Now look at the board please. Let's say words in which we have these sounds, words in which we have these sounds. So let's start with these letters, so /ae/ and /ei/ sounds. We have two sounds on the board. (xx)

2. S: Head?


5. T: Plane, yes good, write it up there. Good for you. Yes, Maja?

6. S: (xx)

7. T: Sorry?

8. S: /ei/

9. T: /ei/ is the sound. Those syllables (xx).

10. S: Play.

11. T: Yes Tigran, go and write.

12. S: Game, game.

13. T: You write game, computerized game. (xx) uh huh. Good for you. (xx), very good. Write on the board please. Dear friends, now let's look at the board and see whether all these words are given correctly. (T repeats in Armenian) (xx)?


15. T: Uh huh, yes. They are given correctly.

(NO2p1)

In this lesson she also made use of wall charts, colour-coded materials, and realia. All of these show attention to both visual learning in addition to aural learning.

It should be noted, however, that although the participants attributed knowledge of perceptual learning styles to the TEFL Certificate programme, their Soviet Methods textbook discusses ‘the principle of visualization’ (Rogova, 1975, p. 49). Sense perception is described as the basis of knowledge and therefore of language learning. It is described as particularly important ‘in artificial conditions’ such as the classroom:

Through visual presentation of the material and the pupils’ observation of language behaviour of native speakers they acquire the necessary habits and skills in spoken language, namely, in intonation, word usage and grammar. Visualization allows the teacher to create natural conditions for pupils’ oral practice and ‘free conversation’ (p. 49-50).

Rogova goes on to recommend the extensive use of audio-visual aids and materials which ‘the teacher of the foreign language has at his disposal nowadays’ (p. 52), a condition which the participants of this study, in particular Nune, would beg to differ.
Nune also addressed other perceptual modes such as the auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic that Reid (1987) mentions. Later in the same lesson Nune reviewed numbers with the students. After having the students recite a poem about the numbers 1 through 10, she then had one of the students explain (in Armenian) the rule for making the numbers 13 through 19. She then randomly wrote and pointed at the numbers 11 through 19 on the blackboard and elicited their names from the students. The researcher and Nune (N) discussed both parts of the activity as follows.

R: ... I noticed the children had cards to hold up, they were going through the numbers, and others of them were holding up the number of fingers on their hand. Why did you do this with them?
N: So every time, especially I mean for the lower grade, when I just introduce them to the new material, I want to have the same material in flash cards or just to have audiovisual aids because when you say something and you see the same it helps you to have firm idea or just knowledge. Knowledge is just linked with something else, it stays inside you better than when you say only and you don’t see.

This activity shows attention to auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic learning. Nune had students move around quite a bit (despite her crowded classroom with its fixed tables and benches) because she strongly believed that some students needed to move around and not just sit still. This intention is expressed in her practices such as sending students to the blackboard to write their answers and holding up flashcards or their fingers. These practices also express her belief that information needs to be presented in different ways to appeal to different types of learners.

There is another possible source for Nune’s beliefs, however. Such practices can also be understood in terms of Galperin’s development of Activity Theory, which is summarized in the Practical Pedagogy course textbook used by the participants. Galperin emphasized that children engaged in materialization, the process whereby physical objects and activities stand for cognitive concepts as cognitive actions occur. Essentially, the physical helps the child focus attention and thus shapes internalization (Galperin, 1967). Interestingly and perhaps revealingly, Nune is the only participant who mentioned learning about child development and first language acquisition during her Soviet undergraduate pedagogical education.

Nune also enacted her beliefs about individual learner differences at a broader level, by trying to incorporate it into the curriculum in two ways in particular.

First of all, Armenian schools allow language teachers the option of taking the same group of students from the inception of language teaching through graduation. Nune always
took up this option. She stated, ‘In this way I know their weaknesses and strengths, personal characterstic features and find out some ways to support them’ (I1Q2). There are three possible sources for this belief. One is that it is tied to Nune’s belief in supporting individual learner differences, described earlier in this chapter. But another participant cast other light on the source of this type of belief. Lusine described the Soviet system as being teacher-focused to the extent that ‘in Soviet classrooms the teacher was viewed as the expert who had all the answers.... S/he would then be the only one to make judgments about learning...most teachers enjoyed this role of the judge’ (I3Q1). This description in fact sounds not unlike the picture that emerges in what Holliday calls the ‘collectionist’ paradigm (1994; discussed in Chapter Two). In fact Nune describes herself thusly: ‘I am a great judge for everything I do’ (I2Q5). (She said this while pointing out that because classroom observers ‘may not notice anything’ about teacher experimentation and development, she preferred self-evaluation (I2Q5).) She also said of her students, ‘the best thing that I feel every time when I enter the classroom is that I feel that the students to be mine. They are my students’ (Olp6). Nune appears to have rather strong feelings about her class and her students that are consistent with the views described by Lusine. Furthermore, her own similar formative experience of having, admiring, and emulating the same English teacher throughout her secondary schooling (described in Chapter Four) is yet another possible source for this practice. Like many of the other beliefs and practices of the participants, multiple sources including both theoretical and personal knowledge appear to be probable for Nune’s practice of teaching the same group of students throughout their school education.

Nune’s interest in appealing to different learning styles cannot be attributed solely to the theoretical information that she learned in the TEFL Certificate programme or Soviet pedagogical education, however. Her own interest in ensuring that the children of blind parents be treated in the classroom so that they have the same opportunities as other students (described in Chapter Four) is what led her to Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and no doubt also has a role to play in her beliefs and practices. In a sense, Nune is a source for her own beliefs in that she recognized a need and sought to discover information to help her meet that need. Although she turned to source theory for that information, it was Nune’s own beliefs, based on her observations and inferences, which led her to identifying that need and the type of
information that might be useful. In this example, then, three sources of information—personal experience, source and local theory from the TEFL Certificate programme and Soviet pedagogical education, and source theory found through her own research—appear to have played a role in Nune’s beliefs and practices about learners and learning. Similarly, Zara and Hasmik both found information from the TEFL Certificate programme was reinforced by their own personal experiences.

**Personality factors**

Personality is an individual difference that both teachers and learners believe to be influential, even if studies of it are less than convincing (Ellis, 1994). Several of the participants felt that personality factors played a role in learning, and that this was something they learned from the TEFL Certificate programme. They related personality to the idea that it was necessary to recognize someone as an individual, and not just an undifferentiated group member, in order to recognize that personality might be a factor in learning. For example, Varsenik mentioned how important it was ‘to treat the students as individuals’ (Olp5). Irina believes that ‘knowing psychology’ is essential for teachers so that they can ‘find a common language with [their] students’ and help them learn (Olp3). She attributes her knowledge of this to the TEFL certificate program, saying that

after studying at [Western University]…I think every student is a personality, taking into consideration his character or his personal themes and I try to treat them like persons. That’s very important. I think it is important but in our home university we were like a group. We weren’t considered as persons, different individuals. That was like a group of people who needed to know something, so our personal characters were not considered there. But now I try to consider and to use them for students. What to give their clues, right clues to improve their learning process (Olp10).

This passage also reveals how two types of personal experience, that of being treated as a member of a group and that of being treated as an individual, enabled a comparison to be made that influenced teaching beliefs (and presumably practices).

Specific personality factors were also mentioned by some of the participants. Irina felt that confident learners learned more quickly because they were unafraid of taking risks to make use of learning opportunities. She felt that a teacher could create an atmosphere that enhanced confidence (and therefore risk-taking) through encouragement. Although Irina was
unemployed, she did describe a videotaped lesson from her practicum course in which she first realized how she encouraged her students.

1. I: First of all, I like this sign very much. This is the sign. (((Irina makes a thumbs up sign.)))
2. R: Yes, thumbs up. So you like that one.
3. I: And [name of mentor] said it's a very good thing to encourage your students. ‘You encourage them very much’ and I think that he told me that and I realized it. I really encourage them. (((laughter)))
4. R: And you didn’t know you were doing that before?
5. I: No, I didn’t. I didn’t pay so much attention. I know that I encourage them in that way but he just made it some important thing of it.
6. R: So he helped you recognize the value of it.
7. I: The value of it, yeah. I didn’t appreciate it very much but I found out. (Olp3)

This passage not only illustrates how one teacher learned to appeal to personality factors, but also how the TEFL Certificate Practicum course enabled the participants to become aware of their teaching practices and beliefs. This not only enabled Irina to make explicit her teaching practices and beliefs, but also enabled her to see herself as a source of information about teaching. She was able to consciously deliberate on her actions, one of the ways professional judgment is developed (Eraut, 1994).

Nune also felt that confidence and risk-taking were important personality factors. Others factors she described were self-esteem, inhibition, and field independence and dependence. One factor in particular that she addressed was the need to involve introverted students so that they would participate more. For the ‘cluster’ activity on criteria for friendship excerpted above (p. 168-169), Nune described another of its aims as encouraging students to participate.

So what I’m thinking is, I appreciate this activity, the cluster, because there are some students in our class who don’t like to speak much but they have something to tell. And that’s why the clusters help them to get to the point, be brief and to the point. And they even push them to speak if it is needed. So that’s why. (Olp1)

Thus besides the nonlinguistic aim of the lesson described above, Nune had a linguistic aim as well. In fact the two are connected: it is through meeting the linguistic aim of students expressing themselves in English that Nune’s nonlinguistic aim of students discovering their values is met. In this way a belief about teaching practices, students should be encouraged to speak in class, is intended to meet a linguistic aim, speaking succinctly, as well as a nonlinguistic aim, discovering values. Apparently underlying this belief is theoretical information
from source and local theory on the role of introversion and extroversion in developing interaction skills. At the same time, Nune also appears to have interpreted that theoretical information to yield practices specifically aimed at helping particular students, thus also relying on her own beliefs.

Zara, teaching mostly young adults in a private language programme, also found herself having to deal with introverted students. The following incident occurred in her class.

1. T: What do you think will be changes in your lives? What will happen?
2. S: (xx) jobs.
3. T: But will there be work here?
4. S: Maybe five years.
5. T: Maybe five years time?
6. S: (xx) I hope that.
7. S: Now we know. ((laughter))
8. S: And then you will apply!
9. S: (xx)
10. T: You mean Yerevan?
12. S: Ah hah! Somehow there'll be change in the environment. ((laughter))
14. S: (xx)
15. S: And political change.
16. S: (xx) ((laughter))
17. T: What jobs are you going to be?
18. S: I'm going to be a surgeon.
19. T: Surgeon?
20. S: Yeah, because I'm studying (xx) and after I will be a cardi-
22. T: That's going to take a long time.
24. T: What will you be doing Hovik?
25. S: I am going to be a journalist (xxxx).
26. T: Is that on radio?
27. S: Yes.
28. T: In your country?
29. S: Yes (xx).
(ZO1p1)

In this passage a number of students freely engage in the discussion in a very conversational way. Although Zara initiates the discussion at turn 1, and occasionally asks questions, as at turns 3, 10, and 17, much of the conversation is not directed by her or at her, but occurs between students, as in turns 6-9 and 11-16. She does not nominate a speaker until turn 24, when she directly asks Hovik a question. She later commented that she nominated Hovik because ‘I saw he was not going to say anything’ (Olp8). She explained, ‘I can’t say what’s the reason, but whenever he has something to say, he really says it, but it doesn’t happen very often’ (Olp8). In other cases, however, she did not nominate a student
because ‘I saw that the student gets really embarrassed. Because he’s not ready for it at that moment. Why put some pressure on him?’ (Olp8). This indicates the way in which Zara pays attention to differences between her students. Rather than expecting them to all contribute in the same way, she offers different kinds of opportunities for different students, tailoring her practices to what she has learned about their personalities. Zara has two beliefs behind her practices in this passage: one is to encourage introverted students to speak, and one is to not embarrass students. These beliefs cause Zara to notice students who don’t contribute, evaluate who would and wouldn’t be embarrassed if nominated, and then, in this example, act by nominating Hovik. And while the TEFL Certificate programme certainly presented Zara with a theoretical understanding of the role of personality, her personal knowledge of student reactions is also necessary to enact her practices effectively. Furthermore, her own experiences play a role as well, because Zara sees herself in introverted students.

Being a shy person myself, I like students who are shy and the only thing I do here is to help them open themselves up a little and also make it so that their shyness does not become an obstacle for their learning and asking questions in particular. I myself got rid of that when I came to [Western University]. Thanks to this institution and most of my teachers I understood that there is nothing wrong in asking questions, even if they are not as ‘smart’ as others. (I6Q3).

It would appear, then, that Zara’s personal knowledge and theoretical information acquired in the TEFL Certificate programme inform her beliefs and practices.

A very different kind of personality factor was at work in Lusine’s class of business students at Graduate University, where a very confident, highly competitive, and often abrupt student, Maro, had difficulty engaging with her classmates in equable ways. This came to a fore during a negotiation task that continued over a three-week period, and became a part of the feedback process in the last session. (The negotiations were between ‘Zambians’ and ‘Germans’ over the construction of a ‘German’ resort in ‘Zambia’; the turns of the student under discussion, Maro, are indicated with (M).)

1. T: OK, so let’s talk about our overall impressions of the negotiations. I would agree that this time it went too smoothly. Can you give me any reasons why?
2. S: (xx).
3. S: Because we knew that this was the last negotiations.
4. S: And both sides were ready to make some concessions.
5. S: Yeah, they were (xx).
6. T: This is really really important because obviously the Zambians needed some concessions and the Germans, I don’t know if, they probably did.
8. S: (xx)
9. T: Did that change your pre-planned negotiation (xx)?
10. M: No, never that. It changed my attitude, like they are ready to (xx).
11. S: That's part of our tactic, to give them something.
12. T: I think the negotiations went really really fine. I think I disagree with Gagik that there were some points that you didn't really discuss because I think that you knew exactly. I'm not saying this is wrong or this is good, but I think that your focus was to come to an agreement and you were-
13. S: (xx)
14. T: You were ready to make concessions very quickly so that you can have a final agreement and that you were efficient. So another thing I noticed in terms of language was more complex language this time than there was the first time. Like Maro, when she made the concession she said 'would you agree to it', whereas the previous time she was more direct and 'this is what we see' and there was not (xx) open to your comment, and probably (xx) changed her attitude.

(LO1p5)

…
15. T: OK, the final thing, I want each of you to tell me one thing you learned from this round of negotiations.
16. S: (xx)
17. S: When we reach agreement be very careful.
18. S: I think that it's really important how you actually enter the negotiations, that (xx), is it that you want to go on, is it a positive way or a negative way. The way that our attitudes changed and their attitude towards us, it was positive so we became positive.
19. S: I think that people share solutions more than problems, other questions are literally just a waste of time (xx).
20. T: Excuse me, maybe this is the time to tell you something that you haven't noticed. I think it is valuable so I noticed, Maro?
21. M: It's not good to look like you're eager to (xx) fight for ownership. Both sides are thinking about what I will do? I will win or you will win. That's not to think that there's solution.
22. T: Excellent point. Very often we walk into negotiations thinking I want to win or I can't win, but it's better not to and this means winning some, losing some. Any questions? (LO1p7)

In this excerpt Maro admits at turn 10 that she underwent an attitude change which ultimately enabled a mutually satisfactory outcome to the negotiation. At turn 14 Lusine explains what she noticed about the change in Maro's language, indicating that Maro's change of attitude was reflected in her choice of language. (The language point was discussed in more detail later in the feedback session, and will also be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.) At the end of the feedback session Lusine returns to another aspect of Maro's changed attitude, nominating Maro to explain her less competitive attitude in turn 21. In this excerpt Lusine shifts the focus of the lesson from negotiating strategies (beginning at turn 6, although a student brings it up first at turn 4), to the language used and the attitudes it expressed (turn 14), to student outcomes (turn 15) and then back to negotiating strategies (turn 20, which invites a student to make point in turn 21). These shifts reflect the different beliefs she has: lessons should focus on content; language for learning needs to be contextualized; students should be aware of what they learned.
Lusine discussed Maro as a learner in general and as a negotiator in the task in some detail. She described Maro as ‘so blunt’ in telling the other side in the first round of negotiations, ‘I really didn’t care about negotiations, I really don’t care about talking to people, I came here to do business’ (Olp3). When asked why Maro’s attitude changed, Lusine offered this analysis.

Well, I think there were two reasons because she’s actually a good learner, very motivated learner. She wants to learn new things and one of the new things she probably picked up from the first session was the use of positive language, even positive attitudes, not just structures et cetera. I think that's one thing she picked up as a learner and wanted to practice, to see how it worked. And the second reason I think that's more, that’s more personal reason, she doesn’t like to socialize with people who she thinks are not as intelligent as she is. And I think she thinks that I am intelligent and she takes me seriously. So if I'm saying something she thinks this is worth considering. I want to indirectly change the attitude she has about socializing with other people (Olp4).

The fact that the student did alter her attitude in the task and explicitly recognized that she had done so suggests that Lusine’s insights into her personality and the ways in which she can be influenced are accurate. They also show how Lusine’s practices reflect her beliefs about the individual differences of students, helping her students become critical thinkers, and treating students with respect. These larger goals derive from a variety of sources, not least of which are Lusine’s own experiences of seeking autonomy as a student as well as her beliefs about the role of the individual in society (both described in Chapter Four). It is also possible that knowledge from source theory has played a role. Here, too, as with Nune’s lesson above, it is through linguistic aims that Lusine’s nonlinguistic aims are met. By having Maro come to grips with the pragmatic force of language, Lusine is also helping Maro understand herself and how she integrates herself into the class—and, presumably, the wider world as well.

Motivation

The participants’ views on the reasons why students in Armenia are motivated to study English have already been discussed in Chapter Four; such underlying reasons are sometimes described as ‘orientation’ rather than ‘motivation’ (Ellis, 1994). But the participants also recognized the role of motivation as ‘the directed effort individual learners make to learn the language’ (Ellis, 1994, p. 509), which is more strongly linked to language learning success than
is orientation. Motivation is often divided into integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985) or intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Brown, 1994).

Varsenik and Lusine both raised the issue of extrinsic motivation for grades, decrying it as harmful to actually learning language because it focused students’ attention on the product rather than the process of learning. Lusine saw the focus on grades as part of the Soviet educational system, although she indicated that there was nothing ideological about it. She also pointed out that draft-age males in particular were prone to being grade-focused, since regular attendance and passing grades were necessary for maintaining their student deferments. Varsenik was at pains to persuade her students to focus on learning and not grades, and found a certain amount of success by emphasizing the importance of actual language skills to potential employers.

The participants in general felt that without motivation there was no learning. They were strongly inclined to believe that intrinsic motivation was more important than extrinsic motivation. Zara wrote, ‘Motivation plays a crucial role in anything you do…where there is no motivation even an interesting task can become boring’ (I6Q3). Lusine wrote that intrinsic motivation was especially important, and continued, ‘If no motivation whatsoever, no learning happens and I have seen this many time unfortunately, especially with Armenian boys who enter university just to avoid military service’ (I6Q4). This contextualizes a comment she made about reward-directed behaviour being a form of intrinsic motivation, suggesting that she recognizes that for some people (in contrast to the boys she mentions) the need for external rewards may be internalized as part of self-esteem needs in the self-actualization process (Maslow, 1970). As Lusine put it,

Even rewards usually defined as external motivators are in a way intrinsic motivator because the learner who learns for good grades or teacher appraisal is INTRINSICALLY motivated to get those rewards (I6Q4).

Nune believed that ‘We need motivation which destroys all walls of defence and anxiety, being afraid of making mistakes’ (I3Q4), thereby tying motivation with personality factors. In other words, in her beliefs Nune has forged a link between different pieces of theoretical information. Other participants and Nune as well, linked student motivation to their teaching practices. They felt that teachers helped students maintain their motivation to learn through flexibility and variety in teaching practices. Varsenik and Zara tied motivation and
variety to maintaining student interest in learning, with Varsenik saying ‘I think that first of all motivation is very important, maybe the first part for learning. And beside it is the classes, make it not boring classes’ (OIp4). In this way theoretical knowledge about motivation, as expressed in particular beliefs, influenced the practices of the participants (all the classroom teachers’ lessons displayed variety).

Beliefs about the role of motivation were not cases of knowledge merely transferring from a ‘theory’, however, because each participant tailored her choice of activities to a particular group of students. They needed to interpret theoretically-based beliefs with concrete information from their classrooms. As Nune said, ‘Lessons need variety.... Different types of activities will be used in different proportions according to the level’ (I3Q4). Zara said that ‘as a teacher you should understand what your students want, what they want, what they want from you and what you can give them because this can be different in different classrooms’ (Olp25-6). In other words, interpretation, partly based on the teachers’ personal, experiential knowledge of the students and partly based on their professional, theoretical knowledge of motivation, was involved in exercising professional judgement (Kumaravadivelu, 1994).

Although professional knowledge of motivation was gained through the TEFL Certificate programme, the participants appear to have embraced the topic because of its resonance with their own language learning experiences. Several recalled how particular teachers motivated them to learn English or take it up as a career (described in Chapter Four). There were three major ways in which these teachers were motivating: they were knowledgeable, they were caring, and they had interesting classes, not unlike the descriptions other researchers have found of teachers describing influential teachers (Bailey et al, 1996). Nune described her favourite teacher as having ‘perfect knowledge’ of English (I6Q1). Zara described a teacher who ‘was very knowledgeable in her subject’ (I6Q2). Lusine, although strongly influenced by her English teacher who experimented with communicative methods, chose another teacher as her favourite: ‘What struck me in his teaching was his sincere love for the thing he was talking about’ (I6Q5). Nune’s favourite teacher was also ‘understanding’ (I6Q1) and displayed this through the personal support she gave Nune during a family tragedy. Zara described a teacher who was ‘ready to help in any way she could.... [She] gave lots of positive feedback which motivated the student to do even better the next time’ (I6Q2). And like many of the participants,
Varsenik wrote that her favourite teacher ‘was very lively. She could manage to do various activities during one lesson’ (I6Q1). These participants were motivated by teachers whose language classes were lifted out of the ordinary by using a variety of activities, including speaking activities. Just as these teachers tried to motivate their students to learn, so do the participants.

Personal experiences as well as knowledge from the TEFL Certificate programme appear to play a role in the participants’ beliefs. The resonance the participants felt between the knowledge they gained about individual learner differences from the TEFL Certificate programme and their personal experiences as learners suggests how Lortie’s ‘apprenticeship of observation’ is used. Knowledge from personal experiences can act as the ‘hook’ to which the ‘loop’ of new knowledge can be woven (velcroed?) into a teacher’s overall belief system. (This is not unlike the role that ‘activated’ background knowledge is theorized to play in reading comprehension.) In this case, the new knowledge about individual learner differences was theoretical. However, it appeared to the participants to account for the success (and lack of success) in learning, both their own and their students’. Perhaps they had never noticed that learners differed in how they learned and responded to different teaching practices; or perhaps they were aware of that, but had never really categorized the learners or considered how learner responses were related to teaching practices; or perhaps they were aware of that, too, but had lacked a system in which to organize this knowledge, perhaps even the vocabulary with which to effectively discuss it. Common to these cases, however, is that the participants had not known about the different types of learning styles, of what personality factors were and how they affected learning, of the types and roles of motivation. They were not able to interpret their experiences as examples of individual learner differences until they had been exposed to the theoretical information that enabled them to either notice or recognize that their experiences were such-and-such a kind of experience. Thus although their experiences had been understood in some aspect, a particular theoretical understanding of them had not previously been available to them. This is one way in which the participants began creating their own personal practical theories of teaching through the integration of their personal experiences, prior beliefs, and beliefs based on theoretical knowledge.
Classroom Language Learning

This section describes the participants’ beliefs about classroom language learning. It discusses what the participants understand about how students learn language in the classroom.

SLA (Second Language Acquisition), as Block points out, has three letters that need ‘unpacking’ (2003, p.1). All three are involved in the beliefs that the participants have about learning English. In his critique Block points out that the ‘S’ in SLA assumes a monolingual perspective; this is a relevant point in this study, as the participants all identify themselves as bilingual; for them, English is indeed an other or additional language, as it is for many of their students. Block’s critique of the ‘L’ also raises highly pertinent issues concerning the differences between language as linguistic competence, language as communicative competence, and language as socially situated. As Chapter Four showed, the participants of this study describe being originally taught language as linguistic competence, only to discover that they had failed to develop communicative competence. Their pedagogical educations would appear to follow this distinction, with linguistic competence the apparent target of their Soviet undergraduate pedagogical education, but communicative competence the target of their TEFL Certificate programme. However, this is not quite as straightforward as appears at first glance. Block critiques the received view of language in SLA research by focusing on the ‘social turn’ (2003, p.3), discussing, among other ideas, the work of Vygotsky and Leontiev. According to Gettys (2000), their work is among the source theories that informed the main language teaching method that the participants covered in their Soviet Practical Pedagogy course. Thus the participants’ beliefs about language may also be more complex than might be assumed. Finally, Block critiques the ‘A’ of acquisition from the social perspective as well, suggesting that the metaphor of participation, again with origins in Vygotsky and Leontiev, offers an additional perspective to the information processing metaphor from cognitive psychology that dominates Western SLA. Here, too, the participants may have complex views influenced by both Soviet language pedagogy and Western SLA theory as presented in their formal educations. It is this ‘letter’ in particular that this section will focus on, although, as I have tried to suggest in this extraordinarily brief overview of SLA, the other two letters cannot be ignored.
Thus in discussing the participants’ views about classroom language learning, this section will focus on their beliefs about what happens when learners (who are not necessarily monolingual) try to acquire or learn (possibly through both cognitive and social processes) language (which may be viewed as linguistic, communicative, and social) in a classroom.

Some of the participants described their beliefs about classroom language learning in detail, while others did not. This section will therefore focus on those participants who addressed the topic more fully. One of them, Lusine, appears to have been strongly influenced by the TEFL Certificate programme. Hasmik and Nune, on the other hand, appear to have been more influenced by their Soviet undergraduate education.

Lusine is one of the participants who appears to have been strongly influenced by the TEFL Certificate (and MA) programme. However, there is a certain tension between her espoused beliefs about her own learning and the learning of her students. As will be seen, this tension appears to be resolved in her practices. I will first discuss her beliefs about how her students learn, and then introduce her beliefs about how she herself learns.

Concerning her learners, Lusine stated ‘I believe in learning but not in teaching. I mean I believe that no one really learns unless there is a need for learning’ (OIp19). This belief was clearly reflected in her classroom, where she took a very student-cantered approach. The course I observed her teaching implemented a task-based approach and was organized around a series of business case studies that involved the students in extended role plays. It was clear from the observed classes that information gaps were part of tasks such as the negotiation role play. Ensuring that there were information gaps between learners ‘so that there can be real communication’ (Oip9) was one practice in particular that Lusine mentioned that reflected her more general belief that there be a ‘need’ for learning. Lusine’s espoused beliefs and her practices together imply a commitment to the strong form of communicative language teaching: language learning occurs through communicating. Lusine attributes her knowledge of this to local theory presented in the TEFL Certificate programme, of which she says, ‘I fully embraced this theory from the very beginning and while teaching I try to choose activities that provide an opportunity for example for information gap’ (I7Q4). Such practices also reflect a corresponding belief in language as communicative, and not just linguistic, competence. Lusine herself
described her decision to offer a task-based course as 'just a natural opportunity for me to practice what I preach, student involvement' (OIp1).

The TEFL MA programme in particular influenced her task-based approach. Lusine wrote of her Teaching Writing course assignments, ‘the last one was a team project and it taught me a lot about the dynamics of team tasks and projects and how I can do similar tasks with my own students’ (I4Q1). But it is also clear from what Lusine says that part of the influence on her adopting a communicative and task-based approach to teaching was not merely the content covered in the TEFL Certificate (and MA) programme, but her own learning experiences within the programme. In comparing her Soviet undergraduate programme and the TEFL Certificate programme, Lusine wrote,

The biggest difference was how I was treated as a student. I felt for the first time that my ideas can be interesting for the teacher, and she cares about those. (I3Q2)

In the classes I observed Lusine’s interest in and respect for her students’ ideas comes through, as the excerpts above show. The feedback session (p. 180) is based on the students’ views of what occurred, and the essay writing (p. 166) focuses on the students’ ideas.

However, as suggested above, Lusine’s beliefs about her own learning suggest that they are complex, as the continuation of the above passage shows.

Next, most of the time the teacher was a learning partner, the only difference being that she was the leader as well, the one to set the right direction for us to take. The teachers were just helping me in my learning rather than giving me all the information (I3Q2).

In describing her own learning, Lusine appears to believe that there is indeed more of a role for the teacher than is implied by her statement, ‘I believe in learning but not in teaching’. This passage suggests that Lusine has a relatively broad view of what it is to learn a language. Her description of teachers ‘helping’ her learn through the dynamics of their relationship goes beyond the information-processing metaphor and suggests that Lusine believes that language is learned through social participation as well as individual cognition. Her efforts to alter the attitude of one of her students (described above) through drawing attention to the effect her language use has on others also offers support for this belief.

Irina also had beliefs about learning that appear to have been influenced by both the content of courses and her own learning experiences in the TEFL Certificate programme. For
example, Irina stated that she learned about classroom language learning in the TEFL Certificate programme. Irina believed that students should ‘try to do it automatically, not paying a lot of attention. Not just to say it and to remember it, this word is this word, but they do it in the process of learning’ (Olp11). This sounds to some extent like an interpretation of Krashen, which was discussed in the TEFL Certificate programme. In addition, Irina’s own sense that she learned about Western teaching through observing her instructors suggests that perhaps her own preference or facility for learning through observation also informs her beliefs about learning in general. As she says, ‘I like to observe how teachers usually teach. I like to observe that process’ (Olp13).

Not all of the participants share these beliefs about learning, however. Several of them believe that learning occurs through conscious processes. These beliefs about learning appear to be attributable to their Soviet undergraduate education, and in particular to their Practical Pedagogy course.

The standard Soviet textbook which the participants used in their Practical Pedagogy course, Methods of Teaching English (Rogova, 1975), discusses the Soviet conscious-practical method, which forms the basis for the more detailed skills-oriented chapters that follow the methods chapter of the book. In brief, the conscious-practical method theorizes that effective classroom language learning involves a conscious approach to language combined with doing practical activities that enable habit formation. The apparent influence of this method on some of the participants will be shown in an analysis of their teaching beliefs and practices. But whether this influence came from this textbook being used in the Practical Pedagogy course, which only one participant mentioned without prompting (Zara), or from their experiences as students of language, as several mentioned above, is difficult to determine. This is especially true of their grammar teaching, since it could also have been influenced by the Theoretical and Practical Grammar courses, as well as general school and undergraduate language courses, as described above. Given the frequency with which the participants describe their own language learning experiences as mostly grammar-translation, it would appear that the Practical Pedagogy textbook and lectures based on it are the source for certain beliefs about language learning. However, as was pointed out above, several of the participants also describe being motivated by language teachers who, in addition to their admirable personal qualities, appear to
have conducted stimulating classes. One wonders whether these teachers, whose classes appear to stand out from the usual grammar-translation classes uniformly dismissed as boring by all of the participants, were in fact skillful adherents of the conscious-practical method. After all, the stimulating classes of three of the participants, all regarded as successful teachers by TEFL Certificate instructors, colleagues, and students, bear the hallmarks of this approach.

The conscious-practical method is based on considerable theoretical and empirical research, particularly in the psychology of learning (Monk, 1990). Considered a separate discipline in the Soviet Union, ‘Foreign language methodology is often defined as applied psychology, a scientific study of the ways in which general psychological principles can be used to facilitate the assimilation of foreign languages by learners’ (Gettys, 2000, p. 35). The first chapter of Rogova (1975) is devoted to outlining the research behind the method and offers a range of Soviet sources over a period of more than fifty years (suggesting that the participants’ perception of Soviet pedagogy as ‘old’ did have a basis in fact). Rogova’s summary of this research and its implications for teaching strongly suggests the scientific or behavioural model of teaching is at work, and this accords with the participants’ comments about how they were expected to follow textbook-based lesson plans and passively accept the teaching advice they were offered by their instructors. This climate is perhaps best revealed in what Rogova has to say about ‘the foreign language syllabus’:

The syllabus, therefore, is a state document which lays down the aims of teaching, the extent of the knowledge, habits and skills pupils must acquire, the sequence of topics which constitute the academic content of the subject. The syllabus is an essential document for every teacher, and he is responsible for the fulfilment of its requirements. The teacher cannot make alterations to the syllabus. The syllabus is uniform for all the teachers working in schools of the given type (1975, p. 53).

It is no surprise, then, that the participants remember their Soviet undergraduate practicum course as emphasizing the importance of following set plans. Nonetheless, the actual pedagogical method described in Rogova is much more than merely a blueprint for the classroom (since it is neither syllabus nor syllabus-derived textbook), and its theoretical foundation appears to have strongly influenced the teaching beliefs and practices of some of the participants.

According to one Soviet-trained commentator, the conscious-practical method arose out of ongoing theoretical debates between what was known as the conscious-comparative method (with a theoretical basis in contrastive analysis) and adaptations of the direct method. Gettys
writes, ‘The theoretical foundation of this method is traced back to the ideas of Vygotsky’ (2000, p. 34). She also describes it as having been strongly influenced by later figures such as Artemov and Belyaev on the psychology of foreign language learning, Rubenstein on memory and learning, Zhinkin on code transformation, Galperin on the development of mental operations, and Leontiev’s Activity Theory. Elsewhere Gettys singles out Galperin, ‘whose name in Russia is associated with his attempt to transform Vygotsky’s cultural-historical approach to human development into a technology of instruction’ (2001, p.1). Monk (1990) mentions many of the same figures.

The conscious-practical method is distinguished from both the direct method and the grammar-translation method. As Rogova puts it,

> The acquisition of knowledge (theory) cannot provide the mastery of the language. Nor can habits ensure this. Only language supported by theory can develop language habits and skills in a desirable direction and lead to the mastering of a foreign language (1975, p. 43).

By ‘language supported by theory’ Rogova means knowledge of the forms of language, not as they are traditionally understood, but rather as ‘algorithms that can direct the pupil’s learning’ (p. 42). She suggests that teachers should introduce these ‘language rules’ because, as Artemov theorized, there is ‘unity’ between language rules and speech activity (p. 41-42). Thus knowledge of ‘language rules’ will help in communication. In this way the conscious-practical method is distinguished from the direct method despite certain affinities with it.

Rogova also distinguishes the conscious-practical method from grammar-translation because it is, in essence, a communicative method. Rogova writes, ‘Such an approach to language learning usually contrasts with ‘mechanical’ learning through repetitive drill’ (p. 41). This is captured by the focus on students using the language to communicate in the accomplishment of tasks. In fact, Rogova even uses the term ‘communicative approach’ to describe the conscious-practical method when she dismisses grammar-translation (p. 43). She does not dismiss translation altogether, however. As she points out, concepts are ‘directly associated’ with language, so although a foreign language learner needs to learn to think in the foreign language, she first makes use of her native language as an ‘intermediate link’ until, through ‘constant practice’, foreign language words are directly associated with concepts (p. 43-44).
As mentioned above, a number of works are cited to support the theoretical foundations of the conscious-practical method, both as a learning process and as a teaching process.

Citing Belyaev, Rogova describes the stages of learning a foreign language as:

1. primary skills supported and directed by theory, i.e., the learner is told what to do and how to do it, he is conscious of the action he is to perform; 2. habits, i.e., the learner performs the action until it becomes habitual and does not require further attendance; and 3. secondary skills imply the use of the material in the act of communication (1975, p. 46).

Rogova then cites Galperin for the following stages to take place in the classroom:

1. the singling out of the structural signals or the ‘orienting points’ of a foreign language phenomenon being assimilated, followed by their cognition;
2. the mastering of these ‘orienting points’ by performing operations with the material under study, following a model;
3. the performing of operations under study, following a model;
4. the using of the given phenomenon in communication with a set task (1975, p. 46).

Such consciousness consolidates learning, makes it available for further inspection, and enables learners to associate it with other learning, in particular that which has already become automatized, thereby drawing conscious attention to previous learning as well as the new target, which in turn perpetuates the learning cycle. It is ‘a dialectical unity of automatism and consciousness’ (Rogova, 1975, p. 46). In this view the teachers’ role (within the confines of the syllabus, of course) is to create ‘an optimal combination of the conditions’ needed for students to form correct structures, refine them through practice, and internalize them (Galperin, 1989, p.67).

Rogova offers several methodological principles that in effect summarize the conscious-practical method, stating that it is necessary to cope with the first language, stimulate students’ activity by using the target language, and follow an oral approach that lets students use the target language to communicate. All in all, it sounds very much like a weak form of communicative language teaching with the addition of planned focus-on-forms in order to cope with the first language and provide ‘algorithms’ to direct learning.

Several of the participants—Hasmik, Nune, and Zara—explicitly referred to the importance of students consciously apprehending language. Hasmik and Nune in particular appeared to agree with and employ the conscious-practical method, as appears to be evident from their stated beliefs and some of their classroom practices. Zara most explicitly attributed some of her beliefs and practices to her Soviet pedagogical education. Excerpts from their
lessons will be presented to show how their classroom practices reflect the basic tenets of this method. (It should be pointed out that there is some overlap with a later section, Teaching Grammar. The focus here is on beliefs about learning, and how those beliefs are reflected in practices. Thus reference must be made to teaching practices in order for inferences to be made, as explained at the beginning of this chapter.)

Hasmik, for example, believes that

The initial stages of learning are very conscious because you should stress on this aspect, on this form, on this meaning, and there's so many things to have focus on...but when, for example, you've covered what all you've gained, all the objectives with grammar, and there's nothing to teach, and it becomes automatic (OIp8).

On Hasmik's view there were three stages to learning: drills, practice, and then use.

Practice leads to use. Because at first we do a lot of drills and then of course we practice. But of course when you practice, again the material may be authentic but again the use may be artificial. That is why you give them some tasks. Like role plays, for example, are useful and it leads to language use (OIp9).

This is a rather different way of using role plays than that of Lusine. Lusine appears to understand using language in activities like role plays to be a means of learning language as is consistent with her avowed commitment to communicative language teaching, while Hasmik appears to understand using language in activities like role plays to be a follow-up to practicing language, as appears to be consistent with the conscious-practical method. The same type of activity is understood to contribute to learning in different ways based on the theoretical position from it is derived, and thus could be said to hold different positions in these two participants' personal practical theories, much as Breen et al describe (2001).

Hasmik's TOEFL examination tutoring is very much in keeping with the conscious-practical method. She expects her students to gradually build up their language through conscious effort, which eventually leads to a 'feel' for the language. She says that 'at the initial stage I include only vocabulary learning and grammar. And then step by step I gradually increase the requirements until they are ready. They know all the aspects of this language and they are ready to write.' (OIp1). Her focus on setting specific targets which the student knows and is supposed to pay attention is suggested by the following. 'When they come to the stage of being able to write a piece in English, and so I say, 'You know if you want to get a minimal score on the writing just follow these instructions'. Like, 'Your essay should have an introduction, body, and conclusion' (OIp2). That is, knowing what to do, a set of instructions
that can act as an algorithm, is the first step to being able to do it. Thus her instructions for rewriting an essay gave a specific target and an admonition to 'pay attention'.

1. T: OK. I find that your essay is not bad, but it needs improvement. Will you try to make improvements, to make some corrections? Very slight corrections like articles, the omission of articles. Like 'the young people' you say, but you should change that to 'young people'. Or here you say 'young', you should say 'a young teacher'.

2. S: Young teacher.

3. T: But you said 'young teacher'. See?

4. S: I see.

5. T: Try to pay attention to this part.

As mentioned above, for Hasmik the ultimate goal is for students to ‘feel’ the language. She said the student being tutored in the excerpt above ‘feels the language. Her sentences are good.... She can develop a topic in English and it’s not just putting the words in the correct order.... She can play with the language.’ (OIp4). But central to the conscious efforts of the student to reach this goal is the teacher because

the leading role is the teachers’. She knows better how to make the teaching-learning process effective, thus helping the learners to achieve their target language goals (I2Q6).

In short, Hasmik believes that learning is a conscious, step-by-step process of building up language that, when successful, leads to automatic use. She believes that learning is guided by a teacher who knows how to create the right conditions to make learning possible, much as Galperin suggests (1989).

Nune has similar beliefs. She believes that conscious knowledge enables individuals to construct further knowledge. Although she said that students first use language unconsciously, ‘during our work together’ it becomes conscious knowledge, which occurs ‘the day the conscious[ness] comes in the work, not just in the use’ (OI1p4). This sounds very much like the first step Rogova attributes to Galperin (1975). Nune described her beliefs about constructed knowledge in some detail; in this passage she focuses on the roles of teachers and learners.

As to the teacher, s/he helps the pupils to construct the knowledge and contributes to the process of perception. That is combined with learning through doing.... I think both the teacher and pupils contribute [to] each other to construct knowledge: The pupils help the teacher to be familiar with new ways of thinking of their generation...whereas the teacher helps them to acquire knowledge mixed with the known and unknown as a step ahead [for] making progress (I5C).
Nune’s Soviet pedagogical education appears to be a possible source for her beliefs. At the same time, the role of background knowledge in facilitating comprehension was certainly discussed in the Teaching Reading and Writing course in the TEFL Certificate programme; Nune uses the term ‘background knowledge’ in a passage cited below.

According to Nune, metalinguistic knowledge is one way the teacher can assist conscious understanding, while also establishing links to Armenian language classes, which in turn facilitates English language learning. This suggests that Nune believes in making use of the concepts a student understands in their first language, much as Rogova (1975) recommends. Furthermore, Nune believes that through conscious consideration of language, learners can learn more effectively as well as avoid misunderstanding.

Nune demonstrates these beliefs in very active lessons in which students regularly volunteer answers, write on the blackboard, and work on ‘creative’ tasks such as puzzles. Some of these lessons include a very explicit metalinguistic focus, one way of directing conscious attention to language. With a group of third form students—approximately age ten—the following exchange occurred.

((At the end of class, just after an activity in which the students have made sentences using realia in the classroom, the teacher reminds of them of how the lesson began by indicating one of the objects, in this case pointing at the table.))
1. T: What sound do you hear?
2. SS: /æi//æi//æi//
3. T: So ‘e’ sounds /æi/, an open syllable. Yes, how many syllables do you know, the types of syllables mean? (T repeats instructions in Armenian.)
4. SS: (SS shout out different names of sounds/syllables in Armenian.)
5. T: (T repeats names of sounds/syllables in Armenian.) I am going to write each word on the board and you are going to write in the appropriate section, OK. So for next time you are going to revise all the syllables we have tried to do. So ‘æi’, ‘e1’.

As this lesson demonstrates, Nune has the students categorizing language items using metalanguage, one of several ways in which to consciously manipulate language data in order for a ‘teaching point’ (Rogova, 1975, p. 49) to emerge. Nune feels that this is a necessary part of classroom language learning.

Step by step they are involved in the language. As they have background knowledge in Armenian and Russian these two languages help them to have a conscious knowledge already for comparison of conscious knowledge in English…. And even you know there are some cases, for example, when I’m explaining the sounds, how to pronounce the sounds, because in English there are sounds which we don’t have in Armenian, so there are some sounds which are used in Russian, too. Russian and Armenian sounds are similar. There are some cases and while speaking about, for example, dark /r/ and
light /r/, for example ‘door’ or ‘car’, we have two ‘r’s in Armenian. So in case when I want to make the pronunciation better, so I explain it is not /rr/, it is /r/. ‘Put your tongue, the tip of your tongue, in this position.’ And so they have the comparison. It is already conscious knowledge, but they have the examples and they try to compare and go to the better one, the better variant which is offered (Ol4p).

This type of contrastive analysis of sounds, part of the heritage from the conscious-comparative method (Gettys, 2000), is recommended in Rogova, who also strongly recommends that students learn phonetic symbols, clearly in use in Nune’s lessons. What Nune does is try to make her students learn when and how to transfer appropriate knowledge of their first language to English. Thus, as Rogova advises, ‘it is necessary to cope with the mother tongue of the pupils’ (Rogova, 1975, p. 45), not ignore it. The passage also shows how Nune’s beliefs about language learning are linked to her recognition that Armenians have typically been bilingual. Although this is changing with a younger generation which is no longer required to study Russian in school, it continues to form a part of Nune’s beliefs and practices (suggesting their persistence), and is reinforced in her experiences with younger students who still do know Russian (although possibly acquired naturally).

However, it is in grammar lessons that efforts to create ‘conscious’ or explicit learning through explicit teaching is most evident in Nune’s lessons. With the same group of third form students the following activity took place.

1. T: …. Now let’s review pronouns which you know. Look at this chart. ((T indicates chart on front wall.)) Read and let’s find out which column, look at the chart and find out which column is the personal pronoun column and which is the possessive pronoun column. Here, so we have blue column and red column. (T repeats instructions in Armenian.)
2. S: I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they.
4. S: My, your, his, her, its, our, your, theirs.
5. T: Very good. Well-done. (T repeats praise in Armenian; gives instructions in Armenian; then says ‘My dog is black’ in Armenian.)
7. S: My dog was-
8. SS: Is black-
9. S: My dog is black.
10. T: My dog is black. (T asks following question in Armenian before asking it in English.) Is there a possessive pronoun here?
11. SS: My/my/my.
(NO2p3)

In this excerpt Nune uses metalanguage, both in English and in Armenian, to review pronouns. When asked about the value of doing this—especially with such young students—Nune said,
So in Armenian textbooks it is mentioned for the third grade, these grammar materials are explained, and they have background knowledge connected with this material. And that’s why in order to have better perception about what is going on speaking about pronouns and that, so I have made a comparison with their Armenian and English variants (Ol’p3).

This kind of focus on similarities and differences between language systems is encouraged by Rogova, who recommends ‘some comparison of language phenomena in both languages clearly showing the peculiarities of the foreign language, its distinctive features, its characteristics’ (1975, p. 44). As briefly mentioned above, it is also interesting that Nune incorporates technical terms like ‘background knowledge’ which she learned in the TEFL Certificate programme in her discussion of this point, and is suggestive of how Nune has transformed information from a variety of sources into her own personal practical theory.

Nune further elaborates on the importance of such conscious knowledge as the tool by which learners can construct their own knowledge. She continues,

> I think it’s not compulsory but it is important that they have this kind of knowledge. And I think every time I insist on the point that conscious knowledge, if the child is able to have conscious knowledge, so it should be given. .... If this knowledge exists the further steps are taken more freely because they know how to go, how to give, what one to put to what one, which one. So this they themselves build their own knowledge and they construct it. So that’s why construction is one of the best ways of creating knowledge because everyone creates in his or her own way. And of course this knowledge is an important thing (Ol’p3).

This belief in constructing knowledge is also further reflected in the same lesson.

The lesson continues, with the shift to sentence construction begun at turn 6 above twice becoming the focus, without losing the focus on pronouns.

12. T: (T says ‘I like cats’ in Armenian.)
13. SS: [Me-
14. SS: [I-
15. T: I like-
16. SS: I like cats.
17. T: (T says ‘I’ in Armenian)
18. SS: I.
19. T: Good for you. We. (T says ‘we are pupils’ in Armenian.)
20. SS: We are-
21. T: We are pupils. (T says ‘we’ in Armenian.)
22. SS: We/we/we.
(NO2p3)

Nune’s beliefs about constructing language ‘step by step’ (as well as the use of translation, to be discussed later) are displayed at turns 13-15. A student begins a sentence but offers both ‘me’ and ‘I’. Nune selects the correct one and offers the next word; then all the students join in
to complete the sentence. At turns 18-20 a similar exchange occurs, with the teacher offering ‘we’ and the students supplying the appropriate verb, then the teacher completing the sentence. Together, Nune and the students construct sentences ‘step by step’.

In this lesson Nune’s practices appear to reflect two beliefs: that students should learn consciously and that students should learn through constructing knowledge. Nune herself understands this, as her analysis of the part of the lesson in the next excerpt shows.

The pronoun review was followed somewhat later in the lesson with the following activity. Of particular interest is the way in which controlled practice is made somewhat meaningful by reference to the researcher who does not know any of the students’ names. It is difficult to attribute this exclusively to either her Soviet pedagogical training or the TEFL Certificate course. Providing a goal is a necessary part of an activity, as described in Activity Theory (Lantolf, 2000), and it is also mentioned in Rogova (1975). But this could also be an attempt to create an information gap, which Nune would have learned about from the TEFL Certificate programme.

1. T: ...I would like to ask some of you to come here, so (x) come here, (x) come here, (x) come here, and you come here. You need to help me here. ((T asks several more students to come to the front.)) That's enough I think, that's enough. Now please, I would like you to tell me their names. What is his name?
2. SS: His name is (Artak).
3. T: His name is Artak. Her name-
4. SS: Her name is (xx).
5. T: Yes, (xx). What is his name?
6. S: His name is Artur.
7. T: Sit down. What is her name?
8. S: Her name is Maro.
9. T: Sit down. What is his name?
10. S: Her--his--her name is Arsen.
11. T: Is he a girl?
12. S: His name is Arsen.
13. T: Yes, his name is Arsen and he's a boy, strong boy. And what is her name?
14. S: Her name is Maja.
15. T: Her name is Maja. What is my name?
16. S: [What is-
17. S: [Her name is-
18. SS: [Your name is Mrs. ((name given))]
19. T: And who would like to know her name?
20. S: (xx).
21. T: Her name is Anne. Her name is Anne. So my name is ((name given)), and her name is Anne Feryok. Anne Feryok. So we have reviewed pronouns in this way. (NO2p4-5)

Nune analyzed what she was doing in this part of the lesson.
Then something like a chain. The word becomes an expression, the expression became a sentence: 'So what's your name? My name for example is [Nune].' And 'my name', 'your name' they have already created. And maybe these first steps are, I also want to repeat, these steps may be unconscious, but later when they realize 'my', 'your', then conscious. And 'his name' and 'her name' which I have [said] during the class, so they already know 'his' is something which should be said to a boy. There is something, so it is already conscious (OIp5).

Nune’s analysis reflects her beliefs that students should be conscious of what they are learning and that they should construct knowledge in steps.

Although it is difficult to confidently attribute particular practices to a theory, it does appear on the face of it that Nune has been influenced by the conscious-practical method advocated in Rogova. And although it would be impossible to assert that Nune has been influenced only by what she learned about these theories in her pedagogy courses, as opposed to what she learned from her years as a student in Soviet language classrooms, the fact that Nune can explain the theoretical beliefs on which she bases her practices, using much of the same language to describe the same concepts, suggests that source and local theory from her Soviet pedagogy courses are indeed the sources of her beliefs about learning language.

Zara also believes that understanding language structures is important to language learning. ‘To me, a language learner should try to understand the inner structure of the language first and then it would be easier to do the rest of the learning’ (I5Q4). Zara attributes these beliefs to her Soviet undergraduate pedagogical education. She is also the one participant who spontaneously referred to the textbook Methods of Teaching English from her Practical Pedagogy course. Thus it is perhaps clearest in Zara’s case that some of her beliefs and the practices associated with them are attributable to source and local theory from Soviet pedagogy.

Zara addresses her belief that language learners should learn forms by combining several teaching options for ‘grammar explicitly explained’ (OIp20). In the following excerpt she combines structured input with explicit instruction, including metalanguage, in order that her students consciously approach the form-function mappings used to represent the future in English.

1. T: So open your books to p. (xx). So last time we were talking about ex. A. Do you remember this exercise?
2. SS: Yes.
3. T: About computers?
4. SS: Yes.
5. T: We were talking about computers and what kinds of ways computers will-
6. SS: Change our lives.
7. T: So what tense will we use?
8. SS: Future.
9. T: If we are talking about future we (xx), we are talking about the future, so what about it? Read out the sentences.
10. (SS read out sentences, T writes on board.)
11. T: So you still have all these sentences about what will happen in the future. Do they show the action in the same way?
12. SS: No.
13. T: No, not in the same way, so how are they different? Let's see what kind of tenses. We have 'you won't ever need to use the (xx) anymore', and 'it will be able to recognize', we have 'everyone will be using', 'information would'. Let's underline them.
14. SS: Will be coming, are going, continuous, (xx), will, (xx).
15. T: Good. So how are these different?
17. T: What about this one or another?
18. S: Different tenses.

In this excerpt Zara focuses the students' attention first on the time frame of the sentences (turn 7), next on forms in general with the leading question, 'Do they show the action in the same way?' (turn 10), and then on the differences in the forms with her echoing of the students' responses and the next leading question, 'No, not in the same way, so how are they different?' (turn 12)' This is followed by underlining several tenses. A very teacher-fronted presentation, the focus is nonetheless on the students' mental processes by involving the students' conscious consideration of the material through the careful selection of what they are to attend to. The lesson continues.

19. T: OK, so what we have here is everything in the future, but then I ask you how different (xx) another example. Let's take these sentences, let's take this one, let's take this, and let's take this sentence. These three, 'won't ever need', 'will be able to recognize', and 'computers are going to take over' are they, let's compare these three sentences.
20. S: (xx) aspect (xx).
21. T: S says they show the same aspect, you won't ever need (xx) the same.
22. S: Will be, the future.
23. T: They are all the future.
24. SS: Negative.
25. T: Negative and affirmative. They show something that will just-
27. T: Happen in the future. So let's look at the difference between these two and this one 'it will be able to recognize' and 'computers are going to take over'. Is it future continuous?
28. SS: No.
29. S: It's present continuous.
30. T: It's present continuous, OK, but why then is that the present for future?
31. SS: (xx) because (xx).
32. T: OK, so in fact the form is present continuous but this action is going to happen in-
33. SS: Future.

(ZO1p5-6)
In this section the students’ spontaneous metalinguistic explanations appear (turns 20 and 22), enabling Zara to efficiently point out that a single form can express different times. The lesson continues with Zara focusing on the differences in the meanings conveyed by the tenses in the selected sentences.

34. T: Future. OK, so what is the difference between this and this? This is also going to happen-
35. S: Maybe the difference is you know-
36. SS: (xx)
37. T: Good.
38. SS: (xx) ((laughter))
39. T: OK, I see. ((laughter)) OK, it’s here like when we say ‘it will be’ the difference between ‘will’ and ‘are going to’. This may also happen or not, but when you say ‘computers are going’ it was planned because everything that happens in the future is happening now.
40. S: It’s going to be.
41. T: It’s going to be changing. In this case we can say that we are more than sure that this will happen, so in order, if we summarize this ‘will’ and ‘are going to’ what can we say? That if we use ‘will’ for future it means this action may happen or-
42. S: Or not.
43. T: May not. If we say ‘going to’, that it might happen for sure.
44. SS: For sure.
45. T: OK, now let’s listen to the next sentence ‘everyone will be using computers’ and we had one more, these two, ‘information will be coming from computers’. Can you tell me what kind of future or futures?
46. S: Future continuous. ((T puts sentences on board.))
47. T: So what is the reason we may use this and not this? For example, what should I say, ‘will be using’ or ‘it will be’, ‘will use’?
48. S: We will be using them.
49. T: OK, good, like you want to emphasize what?
50. S: The computer.
51. T: Action, you want to emphasize the action, that it will be-
52. S: In progress.
53. T: In progress, that you will be using computers, information will be coming from computers. In this case when we are using this, we want to stress that it will be in progress.
54. S: It will happen.
55. T: Yes, and what about this one?
56. S: Will have disappeared.
57. T: OK, we have the future and we have-
58. S: Future perfect.
59. T: So-
60. S: The action is (xx).
61. SS: (xx)
62. T: Future perfect (xx). You might be able to guess future perfect. It shows that it will, future and it will-
63. SS: (xx)
64. S: It will be in future and it will be.
65. T: OK. Good, it means that this action will be-
66. S: [Done.
67. S: [In the future
68. S: [Completed by the-
69. T: ‘Newspapers will have disappeared’. It means that for example the newspapers here (xx) and (xx) ((T draws timeline on board)) and by this time I say there are no newspapers, OK, and I say people will be receiving all the information through-
In this excerpt Zara elicits several form-function mappings through structured input and questioning that guides the students to account for the differences in meanings among the tenses. At turns 36 and 38, the students make a joke (which was not intelligible in the recording) when they are unable to provide an explanation of the difference between ‘will’ and ‘be going to’. Zara begins an explanation at turn 39 which is continued by a student at turn 40, which Zara then expands at turn 41 and uses to summarize the difference between the two tenses under discussion. She moves on to the future continuous, again focusing on how form expresses meaning at turn 47, again eliciting as much as she can from the students. Eventually Zara suggests that they ‘might be able to guess’ the function of the future perfect for themselves at turn 62, a timely reminder that they have previously studied the perfect aspect for present and past.

According to Zara, many of her students appear to prefer explicit and deductive learning of grammar rules. In fact, Zara has a rather nuanced view of its value, based on her personal knowledge of her students and her classroom experience.

They feel secure when they know a lot of grammar, even though it doesn’t mean that they won’t make mistakes, in speaking especially. They will. But they are secure when they know these grammar rules, at least in writing. But for example in writing I have noticed this improvement when they don’t make those grammar mistakes that they did. And this correction is also due to the grammar that we are having. I think that there is a positive part of them when they see other people’s mistakes and they feel it. They may be sort of able to correct those mistakes in grammar (OiP4).

It is her personal knowledge of how her students learn and how they feel about their learning that guides Zara in making choices in the classroom. She recounted how a student teacher in her classroom used a different approach that left her students puzzled because their expectations were not met.

And so she had lots of examples from students, she made them write on the board. She did all that thing, she supplied them with lots of examples, but in the end, OK, then, when she was over, she said, ‘OK. You had this, this was what was like in the book’. And I saw the surprised look of my students because they know what they were used to and what they were expecting to have, and so they weren’t sure. Was it grammar? Was something explained to them? Or did they do the explanation? If they did, what was it? So in the next class this woman didn’t come, they asked me to explain it. …. They were not comfortable with that teaching. (OiP19).
Zara summarized her students’ response to the inductive approach by noting their age: ‘30 and above, which means to me that they already have a lot of Soviet education. They really like to have the grammar explicitly explained to them’ (Olp20). In this comment Zara reveals considerable empathy for her students who, like herself, had a Soviet education. As she puts it, ‘I am open to new ideas but if it works as well as the old and already tried approaches then I would rather choose the old ones’ (I5Q1).

Zara does not believe that all of her students learn in the same way. What she does believe is that it is the teacher’s responsibility to find out how her students prefer to learn and how she can best teach them. As she says of the group who had the inductive lesson,

But with that group it wasn’t OK. There are things that I mean here are that you should take your students’ needs and their ages into consideration because I think that the tried variant [deductive grammar teaching] was better in that case (Olp19).

She underlined her beliefs when asked what she thought was the best way for students to learn. Zara said,

It depends. .... For example, if you feel they can figure it out for themselves, then maybe give it implicitly, not explicitly. But if you feel that, for example, they didn’t understand, what else can you do? Just leave it there, or do more explicit explanation yourself? (Olp20).

Zara’s belief that not all classroom learning should be directed at developing conscious knowledge of structures was further elaborated with other comments. For example, Zara described a successful class as one ‘when students simply forget they are in a classroom and start speaking English without paying attention to the mistakes they make, or the task under study’ (I7Q1). Her beliefs about the importance of spontaneity and meaningful, genuine communication will be addressed in the section on beliefs about teaching. They are noted here, however, to indicate that her teaching practices imply a more complex set of beliefs about how language is learned than she articulates. However, her practices, as will be seen, are consistent with both views.

It appears, then, that Zara believes that learning can be accomplished in different ways through different practices, but whatever the way or practice, success is judged by the understanding of the learner. Thus although Zara’s beliefs about the importance of conscious understanding of language for learning appear to be attributable to source and local theory from her Soviet pedagogical education, her belief that she should appeal to her students’ learning
preferences is attributable to source theory from her TEFL certificate education. Furthermore, these beliefs are interpreted through her beliefs about particular students.

**Summary of Beliefs about Learning**

The participants share some common beliefs about individual learner differences, while they differ in their beliefs about classroom language learning. All of the participants believe that individual learner differences play an important role in language learning. They believe that learning styles and personality factors affect language learning. They are especially convinced that intrinsic motivation is essential to successful language learning. Some of them feel that extrinsic motivation is actually harmful to language learning. All of them demonstrated practices that were consistent with their beliefs.

One of the participants has strongly held espoused beliefs about communicative language teaching. This participant also holds strong beliefs about the importance of learning language through meaningful and genuine communication. Her classroom practices reflect these views. Another participant believes in the importance of interaction for language learning, but also believes that understanding language structures facilitates language learning. In her case, her beliefs are reflected in her practices by addressing both kinds of learning at separate times in her classroom. Other participants felt that learning was a conscious step by step process, and had practices that reflected this belief. These beliefs and their associated practices form part of the answer to the third research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’

This section also offers part of the answer to the second research question, ‘What is the role of the influences that shape personal practical theories?’ In particular it offers an answer to the subquestions, ‘What is the role of theory, both source and local, in personal practical theories?’ and ‘What is the role of experience in personal practical theories?’ Several sources of theoretical information appear to have influenced the beliefs of the participants about learning. Beliefs and practices associated with individual learning factors appear to be attributable almost exclusively to source theory from the TEFL Certificate programme, where such information was considered by the participants to be new and useful. There is a possibility, however, that theoretical and practical information from their Soviet pedagogical educations also influenced
the participants’ beliefs and practices. Beliefs and practices associated with classroom language learning in general appear to be attributable to several sources. For some participants, beliefs about classroom language learning and associated teaching practices appear to be more strongly attributable to source and local theory and/or personal experiences in the TEFL Certificate programme, and for other participants they appear to be more strongly attributable to source and local theory and/or personal learning experiences in the Soviet undergraduate programme. The participants’ own learning and teaching experiences also seem to have played a role in beliefs about learning processes.

Because beliefs about classroom language learning are so closely tied to beliefs about teaching, it is no surprise that this multiplicity of beliefs and sources will also be true of the teaching beliefs and practices of the participants, the topic of the next section.

**Beliefs about Teaching**

This section describes the participants’ beliefs about teaching. It offers part of the answer to the third research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’ It also offers insights into the second research question, ‘What is the role of the influences that shape personal practical theories?’

The participants’ espoused beliefs about teaching cover a wide range, from planning to reflecting, from organizing activities to correcting errors. Furthermore, different participants addressed different issues. This section, therefore, will cover the areas that the participants covered in the greatest depth. As with previous topics, some participants addressed topics in greater detail, and this will determine the amount of attention devoted to particular participants. This section will include the following subsections:

- Planning and planned versus spontaneous teaching
  - Irina
  - Hasmik
  - Varsenik
  - Nune
  - Zara
  - Lusine
These section headings are based on the themes that emerged from the categories listed in the introduction to Chapter Five (see p. 162-163), as well as these categories (and subcategories): practicum effects (practical), Russian/Soviet pedagogy (courses, influence), Western pedagogy (courses, influence), needs analysis, good teaching, generational differences, student expectations, how the participant learned English, teacher qualities, and first day planning.

Planning and Planned Versus Spontaneous Teaching

This section will discuss the participants’ beliefs about the role of planning in their teaching. In planning, the participants’ espoused beliefs about a variety of topics are shown. For all of the participants, the process of planning is tied to their beliefs about and experiences of the situation in which they teach: Armenia, a former republic of the Soviet Union, struggling to reshape herself. Materials, classroom conditions, supervisors and colleagues, student attitudes—all these and more are considered in the planning stage of teaching. However, planned versus spontaneous teaching is also connected with other beliefs. For some of the participants, it shows the impact of their Practicum courses (both Soviet undergraduate and TEFL Certificate). For others, planned versus spontaneous teaching shows how their beliefs about learners and learning are purposively addressed.

Planning appears to be strongly related to perceived constraints and possible resources. Thus some participants had more opportunities to ‘follow their hearts’ than others. Three in particular—Nune, Varsenik, and Zara—were strongly constrained by situational factors. However, constraints alone did not fully determine any of these teachers’ classes. Responding to student reactions, that is, making use of the resources that students and
teachers bring to their classrooms, also played an important role in the classroom. However, because constraints do play such a large role in these teachers’ planning, this section will be organized around each teacher so that a brief description of their teaching situations can be given.

Irina

Irina was not teaching at the time the data was gathered. However, she offered her comments on her own planning in the classroom. She wrote,

I usually follow the plan of the lesson I designed, but sometimes of course there are exceptions. I do not let the lesson flow with my spontaneous ideas and not let it flow from students' responses either, but I can make use of the responses of the students and use some of them which are in correspondence with my lesson plan (I7Q1).

Irina’s description of her planning stands in stark contrast to descriptions offered by other participants. It also suggests that her professed belief in communicative language teaching might be difficult to enact in such a tightly planned classroom. While other participants in this study also emphasize the importance of following a plan, they also appear to recognize and accept a greater role for student responses.

Hasmik

Hasmik was not a classroom teacher during the course of this research, although she was doing private tutoring, mostly for annual examinations, university entrance examinations, and TOEFL. Hasmik had a general approach to planning exam tutoring which was based on both her understanding of the demands of the local situation, in particular the content of the exams, as well as individual student needs. She typically began with vocabulary and then grammar:

Because their vocabulary is very poor and so just giving the grammar doesn’t mean they [can] give sentences because they lack this vocabulary. And they need these words in order to form sentences, and so grammar teaching goes very well with vocabulary (Olp1).

Not surprisingly, this is similar to the overall approach that all of the participants described as typical of their school and undergraduate language educations in which an examination was an annual event. Hasmik began her TOEFL exam tutoring in the same way.
In describing her planning, Hasmik said that although she would follow the objectives of a lesson plan 'if one was available' or of a textbook, 'while teaching I can’t stick to the lesson plan because students ask so many questions related or unrelated to the lesson objectives' (I7Q1). Therefore, when she planned for tutoring sessions,

I planned just the gist...half my lesson is unprepared, like unprepared vocabulary learning. They find a word that is interesting and so I just give them an explanation...it’s based on their problems (OIp1).

It appears, then, that Hasmik’s lessons are planned around a general objective or direction which she then keeps in mind through unplanned exchanges. Those exchanges are evaluated in light of whether they will help meet the objective.

I can’t ignore their questions, but it doesn’t mean I answer all their questions, i.e., I answer only those questions that are more or less related to the lesson, as for questions that are completely irrelevant, I answer them on the surface level. When something unexpected happens, I try to control myself, and get back the students’ attention.... (I7Q1).

According to Hasmik’s account, she appears to keep an objective in mind throughout the lesson. This practice appears to reflect Hasmik’s belief that the teacher has an important role to play in managing effective learning. At the same time she appears to be ready to make use of whatever opportunities students offer to further the lesson’s objectives. This is very unlike her description of the expectations of her undergraduate Practicum course where ‘I was tied to the textbook’ because digressions led to negative evaluations. Thus this belief in a positive role for spontaneity appears to be a result of the TEFL Certificate Practicum course. Hasmik mentioned being told by her TEFL Certificate Practicum mentors that ‘I was very strict with my students’ and ‘I didn’t give my students much time to express themselves’ (I2Q1). She described herself as trying to ‘change my attitude’ towards students in response to her mentors’ comments. In trying to balance planned and spontaneous teaching, Hasmik appears to be trying to balance her belief that she should be managing the learning and her belief that she should be more responsive to the opportunities offered by students. As an excerpt from the classroom observations, quoted below in the subsection Teaching Grammar, Hasmik does make use of these opportunities. In that excerpt, Hasmik incidentally focuses on a grammar point in a writing lesson more generally devoted to rhetoric and development. This also reflects Hasmik’s belief in the fundamental importance of grammar to language learning.
Varsenik taught a reading and vocabulary course at Premier Institute, where she took an active role in her department, such as by giving presentations on teaching speaking and listening. Two constraints influenced her planning: a required textbook and an annual exam. The curriculum was described by Varsenik as ‘we should go up to the end of the book’ (Olp1). Teachers at Premier Institute were allowed to supplement the required textbook with optional textbooks made available to the teachers who then made one photocopy of the material to pass out to the students, who were then supposed to organize individual photocopies for themselves. It is easy to imagine how ineffective this system was in practice, as many students did not bother (or could not afford) to make the photocopies. This often upset Varsenik’s daily planning, such that her belief in the value of flexibility was strongly reinforced by necessity. For example, in one of the lessons I observed, an individual activity planned around the photocopies could not be done because only a fraction of the class came with them; Varsenik turned it into a group activity so that the few photocopies could be distributed around the room. Her plan had to be adjusted in light of reality. Thus it is possible that the regularity with which students come unprepared is a contributing factor to Varsenik’s daily planning. Although she said that it was important ‘to be prepared, to teach your plan, to know what you are going to teach that day’, flexibility was necessary (Olp8). She also wrote that she always ‘prepared something extra’ (I7Q1) just in case.

Varsenik pointed out that when she completed her undergraduate education ‘we didn’t even know how to write a plan, a simple plan’ (Olp3), implying that planning was something she learned in the TEFL Certificate programme (where they were required in the Practicum). Although Varsenik’s plans for the observed lessons were not written down, they nonetheless appeared to be quite detailed; for example, she announced and stuck to very specific timing for a number of smoothly integrated activities. Upon questioning, it turned out that the timing also depended on the students and not just the activities: ‘I think that they are strong enough to prepare it in two or three minutes. If it were another group it would be five minutes’ (Olp8). This suggests considerable knowledge of both the activities and her students’ ability to do them, and also sensitivity to differing needs and abilities, possibly reflecting Varsenik’s belief in the
importance of teacher knowledge of individual learner differences. Interestingly, though, in other respects Varsenik was unaware of how she planned her lessons, as the following exchange suggests.

R: Do you try to integrate [the optional text, Headway] in any way with the required text?
V: Yeah.
R: Because I thought I noticed it in this lesson.
V: Not always.
R: Following on the last lesson I saw, because it was dealing with hypotheticals.
V: Yes, that. We can make some connections (xx) if the lesson is about travelling I can take something from Headway.
R: So sometimes you choose.
V: It will be better, it will be better. I haven’t done it yet, but I think it will be better to use similar themes.
R: Because I thought it was interesting that the hypothetical came up in this Headway just as it had in that bit about art and they were expressing their opinions and right at the end of class you did the hypotheticals with them and then you brought hypotheticals up again at the beginning of this class. It was very nice, it was very smooth. It was nice, but you didn’t notice that?
V: Yeah. (((laughter))) And besides I didn’t set out to make materials for students in order not to have them copy all these things. Besides that, to do that, to take one thing from [the required text], one from Headway or something like, and then so it’s more under control. It would be very nice so.

Although Varsenik appears to state that she integrates the two texts together, it eventually becomes clear that she had merely been assenting to the idea of integrating the two texts. Apparently Varsenik had had no idea of how smoothly integrated the two lessons were.

In the textbook- and exam-driven world of Premier Institute, Varsenik made a conscious decision to make use of the freedom and resources available to her by supplementing the required textbook with a Western textbook that had a more communicative approach in order to ‘develop their speaking’ (Oip1). This decision, therefore, appears to reflect her belief that communicative language teaching was an effective way to address speaking. It also reflects her belief that students should start listening and speaking right away.

Varsenik also considered her own spontaneous ideas and student reactions.

Usually when I am teaching I don’t stick to my lesson plan because something unexpected could happen, or at the moment I have an interesting idea. Usually I prepare more activities than I need to have something extra in case we need them. I try to change some activities when I feel the students do not do them with pleasure (I7Q1).

Her planning appears to be highly conscious in the timing of activities in particular. But it is not obvious that all of her planning decisions and their implications are fully understood by her.
Varsenik did not appear aware of connections between her lessons. Some of her choices appeared to be serendipitous.

**Nune**

Nune, as mentioned previously, taught in the same secondary school she had attended as a student. The headmistress of the school had in fact been one of Nune’s teachers. Nune was extremely active in her department, both in internal matters such as choosing textbooks and planning school-wide activities, and in external matters, such as her efforts to offer teacher training seminars (described in Chapter Four). Her involvement was not always appreciated, and she appeared to have a somewhat stormy relationship with the school administration. Despite the constraints under which Nune taught (or perhaps because of them), Nune has rather strong beliefs about teacher autonomy. She said, quite directly, ‘You can’t have people telling you how to run your classroom, you have to do that yourself’ (Olp18). In such a remark it is perhaps possible to see why Nune has a stormy relationship with an administrator who used ‘pressures’ to make teachers be ‘under her words like a doll’ (Olp18). However, the difficulties appeared to be tempered in part by Nune’s obvious devotion to do anything she could to improve conditions in what was, after all, a very poor school in a very poor district, as well as her popularity with students and parents as a highly effective teacher whose students scored very well on the annual English examination.

Although there was no longer a set syllabus, the annual examination for each level in effect determined what content was supposed to be covered. The required textbook covered the material that would be on the exam. Therefore, Nune’s overall planning began with the required textbook. She was ambivalent about the textbook, which was one of the new Armenian textbooks: she recognized that it was more communicative than the previous textbook, but on the other hand she had designed a syllabus for the previous textbook, which was now no longer useful. In fact, this syllabus was developed as an assignment for Curriculum and Course Design in the TEFL Certificate programme. She found having a syllabus to be a ‘tremendous help’ (I1C), although at the same time its usefulness was ‘limited’ because it didn’t consider individual student needs (I3Q4). Nune’s ambivalent feelings about the new textbook perhaps reflect her espoused belief that communicative language teaching was ‘a better way of
teaching’ (Olp7) as well as her belief that her syllabus had been helpful. Nune ties her
recognition of its limitations to her beliefs about appealing to learner differences. It is also
connected with her beliefs about the importance of doing needs analyses and paying attention
to student feedback, which, like her beliefs about the syllabus, she attributes to the TEFL
Certificate programme. As she puts it, ‘the teacher chooses the program content based on
either assumed needs of students or real needs analysis: during the process, the programme
may be changed based on the students feedback’ (I3Q4).

In general Nune coped with the limitations of textbooks by ‘spicing’ her lessons with her
own approaches to material in the textbooks and her own activities (Olp4). For example, the
friendship lesson cited above was based on the textbook, but ‘spiced’ with the proverbs as well
as the cluster activity (see p. 168-169). This reflects her belief that variety maintained student
interest and appealed to different learning styles and personalities. Many of these activities
were inspired by or directly taken from the Methodology course of the TEFL Certificate
programme. A number of materials which she made also appear to have been influenced by
courses in the TEFL Certificate programme. Some of Nune’s planning, therefore, was a direct
result of the TEFL Certificate programme. In fact, Nune showed me lesson plans which she
had designed and used in the Practicum course and which she still used. (I had some reason
to believe that much of the lesson I observed on ‘friendship’ was based on one such plan.)

Nune felt that planning, executing, and reflecting on lessons

‘is a very conscious process for the teacher.... I plan to learn from my students. This is
very important because each class has their own needs. And I just try to find out the
directional point on which I build the next hour, then elect some material, so I learn from
them’ (Olp13).

‘Directional point’ appears to be student needs, apparently within the context of the
overall framework of the course goals, in that Nune also states that continuity is important:
‘When you continue something that you began formerly it leads to progress’ (Olp13). On the
other hand, it could also be the ‘orienting point’ for which Rogova (1975, p. 46) cites Galperin.
In both cases, this image of an overall teaching framework in which the teacher guides the
students toward progress by helping them ‘continue’ fits nicely with Nune’s beliefs on learning
as something that students construct step by step with the help of their teacher. Through
planning and attention to student needs, the teacher establishes a direction for students which
she helps them reach by leading them through activities that ‘continue’ their progress towards the goal, enabling them to take on more responsibility for their performance. Therefore,

The teacher also needs the answer of ‘why’ question. ...[B]efore entering the classroom the teacher should know and must know inside him or her why he enters this classroom. He or she should know this: what is going to be given to this class and why should it be given (Olp13-14).

Nune describes how teachers do this.

Well, when you plan your lesson you should know why this or that activity..., whether it should give them a positive sense...maybe another activity will be more beneficial than this one. And when you just compare..., you just come across that question with the answer of the ‘why’ question. I chose this one and not that one (Olp14).

Nune appears to describe a very conscious process here with ‘you should know’, ‘you just compare’, ‘I chose’. But her choice of the words to describe what actually happens in making choices between activities is interesting: ‘you just come across that question with the answer of the ‘why’ question’. This suggests the happy coincidence that is serendipity (briefly mentioned above with Varsenik), a receptive recognition rather than an active selection. Something strikes the teacher as perfect, hits the right chord, jumps out at her. It is not the careful weighing of specific features (individual, pair, or group? controlled, guided, or free? receptive, productive, or interactive?) which might be compared and contrasted that Nune describes. What she describes is a holistic rather than analytical grasp of appropriateness. However, there is also the focus on the ‘why’ of the activity. Perhaps one of the differences between Varsenik’s and Nune’s planning is that Varsenik does not focus her attention on the connections between lessons, whereas Nune does, in accordance with her beliefs about learning.

Part of what Nune describes as the conscious aspect of planning, however, is knowing the aims of the lesson. In this respect Nune’s description of her daily planning focused on the theme and grammar target of the current chapter in the required textbook. She would ‘investigate’ the theme and grammar target for discussion points, prepare materials (such as puzzles used to review vocabulary in both classes I observed), and try to find connections between the current material and previous material (I7Q4). She cited her use of proverbs as a warmer in the lesson on friendship as one of these connections, because in the previous lesson they had been asked to write a story about a friend. Similarly, in another class, the students had been working on family vocabulary, and had been asked to draw pictures of their families. These were then used in the next lesson (which I observed) as prompts for the students to talk
about their families (thus reviewing family vocabulary), practice that day’s vocabulary (jobs), and practice that day’s grammar (personal pronouns). In this way Nune linked vocabulary and grammar lessons through a home assignment and a classroom speaking activity. This sort of planning, aimed at consolidating previous material while moving through new material as well as offering students the greatest possible variety of activities, maximizes the usefulness of the highly constrained two hours a week allotted to English lessons. It also reflects Nune's beliefs about learning as constructed by the learner but guided by the teacher. By integrating a variety of activities and learning targets, Nune perhaps sees herself as offering learners different ways of making connections between old knowledge and new knowledge, another of Nune’s beliefs. Different ways of making connections also appeal to learner differences and the need to keep students motivated, two other beliefs that Nune mentioned.

Despite this degree of planning, Nune’s classes have a very spontaneous feel to them. They do not at all appear to be the result of the 'no variation of the syllabus' that Nune describes as typical of teaching during the Soviet Union (Olpa8) and that Rogova (1975) rather strongly advises. The orderly progress towards carefully selected objectives is accomplished in very active, very noisy, very exuberant classes. Nune believes spontaneity is important in the classroom, writing that ‘sometimes the lesson flows with my spontaneous ideas which are mixed with student responses which have connections with the materials and with supporting ideas suggested by the students’ (I7Q1). For example, the classroom observation excerpt below shows one spontaneous moment in Nune’s classroom when a speaking activity becomes an occasion for spontaneous grammar review.

1. S: She has an artist.
2. T: She is an artist. OK. Do you know the difference between has and is? ((T writes on board.)) Children, listen to me now. Look here. Look at the board, look at the board. (xx—in Armenian) ((T points to words while SS read.))
3. SS: [Has.
4. SS: [Is.
5. T: So the difference is, listen, let's try to conjugate the verb to have. Chart, please. Chart, please. ((T points to chart on front wall.)) I have a bag. I have a bag. This is my bag. (I have—in Armenian)
6. SS: You have a bag.
7. T: Now repeat. He-
8. SS: [He has a pet
9. SS: [xx
10. SS: [She has a doll.
11. T: She has a doll.
12. SS: [xx
13. SS: [xx
14. SS: [He has a car.
15. T: OK, he has a car. (We have--in Armenian) We have-
16. SS: We have a teacher.
17. T: We have a teacher. (You have, you have a car--in Armenian)
18. SS: Your/you have/you have a car.
19. T: (They have a large family--in Armenian)
20. SS: [You have a-
21. SS: [You have a large-
22. SS: [(xx).
23. T: They have a large family. They have a large family. OK, Arsen. What is your
father? Look. Pay attention to the question.
24. S: My father is a (xx).
25. T: My father is a businessman, very good. And what is your mother?
26. S: My mother is a doctor.
27. T: Your mother is a doctor. Very good. Who is your mother? What is her name?
28. S: My mother's name is Gayane.
29. T: What's your father's name?
30. S: My father's name is Artur.
31. T: OK, thank you. Now look here, look here. Let's all review the verb to be. To be
(xx) the difference between these two main verbs is (xx). So I am--
32. SS: [I have-
33. SS: [I am-
34. SS: [I am a teacher.
35. T: I am a teacher. (You are pupils--in Armenian)
36. SS: You are pupils. (We are children--in Armenian)
37. SS: [Children
38. SS: [We are children.
39. T: (xx--in Armenian)
40. SS: (xx).
41. T: (We are pupils--in Armenian)
42. SS: We are pupils.
43. T: (You are pupils-- in Armenian)
44. SS: You are pupils.
45. T: They are students-- in Armenian.
46. SS: We are/They are students.
47. T: They are students, OK. Now let's say from the beginning up to the end. I am-
48. S: I am, you are, she is and he is.
49. T: We-
50. S: We are, you are, they are.
51. T: (Very good-- in Armenian) The verb to have please.
52. S: I have, you have, he has she has it has
53. T: We have.
54. S: We have.
55. T: You.
56. S: You have.
57. T: They.
58. S: They.
59. T: Have. OK. They have.
(NO2p6-7)

In this excerpt a student described a family member as ‘She has an artist’ (turn 1). Nune quickly had the students review conjugation of the verb ‘have’ (turns 2-23). It is interesting when she begins to describe the difference at turn 5, she instead appears to change her mind and decides to simply ‘show’ the difference through conjugation and practice. She then returned to the activity, admonishing the students to pay attention at turn 23 and returning to the focus on the professions of family members using ‘be’. Then, following up with a decision
that possibly shows rapid reflection upon the initial spontaneous decision to review grammar, reviewed ‘to be’ (turns 48-51), and ‘to have’ (turns 51-59) with the student who had made the error. (One wonders whether Nune is attempting to address the potential confusion between ‘We have a teacher’ (turn 16) and ‘I am a teacher’ (turn 34) or simply adding to it, however.)

This is an example of Nune’s belief that lesson plans can’t be consulted at every step in the class.

There are some minutes during the class, during the lesson, when you do quite another thing because you can’t just be hands on the lesson plan every time to follow up. This activity should be the first one, this should be the second one, it is not an appropriate way of having a lesson because a teacher can be tense and wouldn’t move freely in the classroom. And the students know, they feel the reaction of the teacher and they will also not feel so much confident, so much free, in relation, when the teacher is always hands on the plan (Olp14).

Thus Nune feels that in the classroom (as opposed to in the planning outside the classroom) teaching should be ‘free’ and responsive. The teacher must be continually gauging and responding to student reactions.

For example, when I enter the classroom I suppose some activity is supposed to be done. Doing this material, while it is being explained, if I should see that this activity needs to be longer than I have intended to do I’ll do it, because the reaction of the students helps me to go further until they have a complete perception of the activity as it was organized (Olp14).

This is accomplished by attention to student behaviour.

Even their participation is a very important thing, because if you see their hands raising so you know...so you feel that they have got the material in an appropriate way and nothing is left to be added...but if all of them have, for example, surprised faces or just their eyes are just lowering and you don’t know who in class knows how to go on, then you know to go to further activities, so you should (Olp14).

At the same time Nune believes that the teacher should be meeting the aims of her (consciously planned) lesson by organizing learning in an orderly fashion. Nune thus describes how she tries to integrate the internal and external views of teaching (Ellis, 1999). The need for a definite direction and the need for instant responses suggest that Eraut’s rapid reflection (1994) and Schon’s reflection-in-action (1997) would appear to match Nune’s detailed description of classroom decision-making. Nune sums up her presence in the classroom as ‘a fish in the water’ (I7Q1). In observation the metaphor appears to be confirmed.

Although Nune’s planning practices to a large extent relied on what she learned in the TEFL Certificate programme, some of the theoretical assumptions underlying Nune’s planning
appeared to be tied to her beliefs about classroom language learning from her Soviet undergraduate education. The actual planning for specific occasions and the actual implementation of plans in the classroom is, of course, strongly influenced by her personal knowledge of her students.

Zara

Zara, who was teaching an intermediate level general course in a private language programme, was also constrained by a required Western textbook series used by all the teachers in all the levels of the programme. There were no examinations. On the other hand, as fee-payers, the students expected that they would ‘get their money’s worth’, which according to Zara meant completing the textbook so they would be ready for the next level, checking all the assigned exercises in the book, and getting more or less equal talk-time in the classroom because they had all paid the same fee. Towards these ends Zara regularly spent part of every class—usually the beginning—checking assigned exercises by going around the room nominating students one by one because ‘it’s fair to do that way. Everybody has a chance to talk’ (Olp7). In this way Zara reflected her sensitivity to student expectations, which in part also reflected her understanding of the difficult local economic situation.

Like Varsenik, Zara did not have written plans: ‘I am simply doing it in my head’ because she had been teaching the same course several times (I2Q5). The required text had a plan (i.e., teacher’s guide) that she followed, but she also supplemented the text with her own materials which she chose based on what she thought would work with a particular group of students. In executing her plan, she wrote,

I am trying to concentrate on the plan I have for a particular class but this does not mean there is no room for changes. .... Both my students and I have spontaneous ideas from time to time but the time allotted to them should not be too much as to make me violate the organization of my lesson plan. If something unexpected happens I do my best to satisfy my students’ curiosity though. .... But again, I do my best to control all those unexpected situations. If I feel that it is going to take too long, I offer to continue the discussion in the break (I7Q1).

Here Zara describes herself as caught between three beliefs—the lesson aims must be met, spontaneity is a good, students should feel satisfied—which would appear to require attention to time, overall aims, and student curiosity. Within the framework of the lesson, however, ‘I am
very flexible and willing to change my plan if I feel that a particular activity is not working well with a concrete group of students’ (I7Q1).

Zara attempted to explain how she managed the planned and unplanned parts of her class. She felt that there was considerable conscious planning on her part. In fact, she described herself as ‘very conscious. By saying conscious, I mean I intently feel everything that is going on in the classroom (even the mistakes I sometimes make)’ (I7Q1). However, Zara also recognized that her classes included a lot of unplanned vocabulary and grammar teaching that depended on student contributions—but only in part. In her oral interview Zara made another attempt at explaining how she understood the way she handled the unplanned parts of her class.

These unconscious things are, I have very, sort of metacognitively, very deep in my mind. Simply at that moment I feel they are good and I push them forward, like they are not completely unplanned. So actually they are in the back of my mind and I feel that this is the right time to say or do that. And I do it (OIp26).

This is a very interesting point that Zara makes, if only for the word choices—‘unconscious’, ‘very deep’, ‘not completely unplanned’—and the image of pushing something from the back of her mind to the front of her mind. The word choices express increasing awareness as she describes this experience. There is a picture here of becoming aware of something, evaluating it (‘I feel that this is the right time’), and controlling it (‘I do it’). This appears to be similar to the process which Schon names reflection-in-action (1987) and Eraut names rapid reflection (1994). Zara’s use of the word ‘metacognitively’ brings to mind Eraut’s point that metacognition is the means by which one provides oneself with feedback, as Zara appears to be describing.

In fact, Zara’s class, like Nune’s, also had a very spontaneous feel to it. Although she stuck very closely to the text in the sense of using the activities in it in the way they were designed—something she felt her fee-paying adult students strongly expected her to do—the interactions between teacher and students and in particular among students were frequently and genuinely contingent. An example of the interplay between the planned and unplanned in Zara’s class is illustrated in the following excerpt. In it Zara begins introducing an exercise to the students, but soon responds to a spontaneous student suggestion that segues into spontaneous practice with contingent exchanges.

1. T: ‘This exercise is very interesting because we need to use three different tenses. Which are they?
2. SS: Past, present, future.
3. T: Past what? Present continuous, past continuous, and future continuous. Do you think that they are somehow similar? Past present and future, is there anything alike between these three tenses?
4. S: They all have go on for.
5. T: Simply one is the past, one in the present, and one in the future. OK, so what time are we talking about in this conversation and how we have changed through the years, so basically we are using sentences in the tense, when we are talking about our past, past years we use-
7. T: Past, we use past tense. Uh what tense can we use for the past, for something that has happened in the past? Which can we use, why, and think of examples. For example, an example from the sentences, when I was a child I was-
8. S: I used to.
9. T: Ah, good. When do we use ‘used to’?
10. S: Used to be.
11. T: Good. Can you tell me a sentence with ‘used to be’. Can you say a sentence where you use ‘used to be’?
12. S: When I was a child I used to play hide and seek.
13. T: So why do we use ‘used to’ here?
14. S: To tell that I used to play hide and seek.
15. T: OK, good.
16. S: ‘So I used to be and another reason is I use ‘used to be’ to say something I did gradually in the past but that I don’t do anymore.
17. T: Something that she used to do in the past.
18. S: Ah, I used to do dancing.
19. T: When? When you were a teenager or a child?
20. S: When I was a teenager I used to go dancing.
21. T: Good.
22. T: What else you don’t do it anymore now?
23. S: I used, I used to go to school.
24. T: Yes, why not? I used to study very well. I used to be a good student.
25. S: I used to (xx).
27. S: I used to make a sandcastle when I was a child or when I was a teenager.
28. T: Yes, yes. It was for some time and you are, you are not any more.
29. S: I used to be rebellious. ((laughter))
30. T: You are so, very. I think that you are still rebellious.
31. S: (in Armenian)
32. T: Ah, when you see or hear something wrong.
33. S: Something wrong so, ah, yes.
34. SS: (in Armenian)
35. T: Ah ha, in what sense?
36. S: (in Armenian)
37. T: Ah, it’s, let’s say it’s against the truth.
38. S: I guess so, against.
39. (ZO2p4-5)

Although the ‘very interesting’ exercise appears to be about continuous tenses, Zara focuses on the past, and a student more narrowly refocuses the lesson on ‘used to’ at turn 8. Zara takes up the student’s point at turn 9. The lesson continues, alternating between elicited grammar explanations and sentences offered by the students. This corresponds to Zara’s belief about language teaching that ‘it’s better to have...as many examples as possible, especially to elicit examples of that from them, to see how they feel about it’ (Olp24). The genuineness of the
students’ contributions is reinforced in turn 29 when one student offers a sentence, but Zara responds to the content. This suggests that possibly the exchange from turns 18-20 is also genuine—that Zara is not leading the student into creating a complex sentence, but curious as to when the student used to go dancing. (NB: Children often take dancing lessons in Armenia, which might be suggested by ‘do’; notice the student shifts to ‘go’ after Zara’s question.)

Besides the unplanned grammar point, there is also the unplanned vocabulary point, also raised by a student. Even during focus-on-forms activities, Zara’s class is full of unplanned moments that often involve genuinely communicative exchanges. This focus on exploiting situations for genuinely meaningful communication is probably a result of practicing what was preached in the TEFL Certificate course, although it may also be attributable to Zara’s own experiences as a learner in the TEFL Certificate programme. Here, too, Zara’s belief that she should make use of her students’ expertise in order to encourage them to talk is influential. Describing her practice related to this belief, Zara says that

> what I do very often is that when we have, for example, a topic that is close to a profession of this or that people, I just ask them to help me. And also I just give them a chance to talk about their profession because they’re knowledgeable in that field and can say something (OIp5).

And although Zara is following a plan, she is also incorporating spontaneously arising elements into her plan, some of them influenced by her personal knowledge of the students. Again the external and internal views of teaching that Ellis describes (1999) are being integrated together by the teacher.

*Lusine*

Of the classroom teachers, Lusine was freest from constraints. She designed the curriculum and chose the materials for the advanced level graduate business English course she taught at Graduate University. She was also involved in trying to develop a writing curriculum for her department. This is not to suggest that there were no constraints, since her students took an annual examination for which she was obliged to prepare them. However, Lusine had input into the examination her students would take. Lusine’s attitude towards institutional constraints was revealing.

Well, I can say for sure that students have always been my priority in decision-making, you know about the teaching situation, which is why I have always wanted to teach in an institution where I would have comparative freedom in, say in, what was happening
in the curriculum, in what was included on the curriculum. I, on the other hand, want a very general direction. It’s not that I want to do everything myself, I want to be told that OK, we want you to do this, but to tell you, because if I’m teaching in an institution, I know they have a policy, I want to be aware of their policy, the outcomes they’re looking for. But I want them to leave me alone on deciding how to come to that outcome, how to lead my students to that outcome (OIp17).

Lusine's focus on transparency and autonomy are very much in keeping with her general views, noted in Chapter Four, about individuals forging their own paths. It is also reflected in the way she interacts with her students. At the level of planning, it is reflected in Lusine exercising her freedom to choose what she will do in her classroom.

Much of her relative freedom at the University was due to her own initiative.

I think everybody has the same freedom, but I rather think that they don’t know how to use that freedom. I think [it’s] an issue, at least with some of my colleagues, because they know this book and they use it only. That book, that’s basically their curriculum, and they feel uncomfortable bringing in supplementary materials (OIp7).

Lusine attributed her own ease at exercising her freedom to the fact that ‘we tend to teach as our teachers do’, a reference to her undergraduate English teacher who tried to use communicative methods and supplemented the required textbook with British and American materials (described in Chapter Four). Lusine felt this teacher had been a very strong influence on her own beliefs and practices. In fact, in her first teaching experiences, Lusine imitated this teacher, incorporating her activities and materials into her own lessons. Despite the eclecticism suggested by this sort of approach, Lusine said,

> there was conscious imitation. I knew why.... I just thought that I liked learning because obviously of the things she was doing and many of my students while I was teaching had very low motivation. So I thought if a teacher could change my attitude toward learning maybe I could do the same with my students (OIp15).

However, Lusine distinguished between planning by consciously imitating her teacher and planning by consciously understanding the aims of activities and objectives for lessons—elements that had been missing from her early teaching, but that are now very much a part of her planning: ‘I have aims, I have objectives why I’m doing that’ (OIp15). She attributed this understanding to learning about the theoretical background to communicative language teaching in the TEFL Certificate programme (described in Chapter Four).

Lusine begins her courses with a survey to find out her students’ needs. In the case of the class which I observed, Lusine said that it had the unintended but happy consequence of opening up communication between her and the students, who took her interest in their
opinions to heart. This focus on student needs reflects Lusine’s belief that learning needs should guide teaching. What needs to be learned determines course objectives and daily lesson plans.

On a daily level, Lusine discussed planning from two perspectives.

Every time I have a lesson I think of what I want to accomplish within the fifty minutes of class. This is where I start from. Then I think of what activities to choose to achieve the goal and how to have fun at the same time. I start looking through the teaching materials I have and choose the ones that seem to fit my purpose best. Sometimes I start from the opposite direction. I may like a reading passage or an activity I would find and I would start thinking about how it fits into my general goal for the specific course. Most of the time I use what I like, but [it] happens so that it won’t fit in any way and I simply leave the passage or activity alone (I7Q1).

Lusine underlined the importance of objectives in her oral interview: ‘Now when it’s a plan for the lesson it means every single thing...I intend to do and I know why I’m doing it.... That’s the major part of planning for me’ (Olp15).

The writing lesson which I observed was an example of planning from an objective. One aim of the lesson was to encourage her students to consider their audience’s expectations when they wrote the second draft of their essays. Towards this end she passed out two very different texts for her students to analyze.

1. T: So we have two different parts of the text. What did we say was the first one? Parts of the text? What is the first one and the second one? Just-OK.
2. SS: Features?
3. T: OK.
4. S: Point of view is global, and the second one is-
5. S: Personal.
6. T: I first want to say-
7. SS: (xx)
8. S: [Message for some person.
9. S: [Native speakers.
10. S: No, no! ((laughter))
11. S: [Well, it's poetic.
12. S: [It's personal.
13. S: (xx)
14. S: (xx) rain on the window of glass, why are we reading this?
15. T: Does it remind of you of anything? Inspire you?
16. S: [It's words.
17. S: [It's a kind of message.
18. S: [It's a poem.
19. T: Yeah, it's a poem.
20. S: It's kind of message to my attention.
21. S: What?
23. S: Of course. Don't you know? Rain hits the window and the heart beats in drops. If you're an Iranian person, and when it rains every drop of rain makes their hearts beat. ((laughter))
24. T: I didn't expect such an analysis. ((laughter)) I was trying to think of a very beautiful layout on the page.
25. S: This is a layout (xxxx). ((laughter))
26. T: Right, right. But, well, this is a poem, particularly a Haiku, definitely xx Japanese poetry. And what is significant about it? The first one, it's a poem. What's the second one?
27. S: An article.
28. SS: (xxxx)
29. T: So, there are two things, a poem and an article on the same paper. Would you approach them both in the same way?
30. S: No-
31. T: What are your expectations when you see them? Once you see the poem, what are your expectations, what do you anticipate?
32. S: It depends on what the purpose is for.
33. T: OK. Let's say, do you want your argument to be a poem?
34. S: It will more than (xx), it will be memorable, whereas the text will be more objective, more (xx).
35. S: (xx) when you read Armenian poem or Haiku (xx) you think that there will be more admiration, more meaning.
36. S: Yeah, it is distracting, for pleasure.
37. T: So very different styles of writing. But as readers we process things as different. When reading a poem we are expecting pleasure, for involving our emotional lives. But when reading an article in a newspaper probably our idea is to get information from it, and very often, well, we either spy for actual information or a statistic or an issue. As readers we approach the writing differently. So when the writer initially writes something we know who it is written for and how the reader will approach the writing. So this is something I wanted to actually have illustrated that our texts are different and I hope I accomplished it: active readers in your mind when you are writing. (xx) are impatient: they will either look for facts in your essay or they will look for perspective. Are you providing those? These are the questions you should consider when you rewrite.

In this lesson Lusine planned for an objective and then chose materials that could be expected to help her students understand the objective. The plan involved presenting the materials and then letting the students discover the objective for themselves, which is not explicitly discussed until her summary at turn 37, although it is pointed at in turns 29 and 31. Again, this style of teaching reflects Lusine’s statement ‘I believe in learning, but I don’t believe in teaching’ (Olp19). Her handling of the discussion—she quickly backed off (not even finishing her instructions) and let the students do their own thinking by guiding them until her summary at the end—is, by Lusine’s accounts, attributable to several factors. Although her own language learning experiences (see Chapter Four and below) appear to have set the stage for the development of her beliefs and practices, Lusine mostly attributes them to her understanding of the teacher’s role as ‘a learning partner’ from the TEFL Certificate programme (I3Q2).

Essential to such a view of teaching is planning opportunities that encourage meaningful student-teacher and student-student interaction, as in the above lesson. What this appears to amount to on Lusine’s view is little more than an objective which the teacher keeps
in mind as she looks for opportunities to help the students reach it. However, this is somewhat different from the approach described above by Hasmik, where the lesson objective acts as the criteria by which student contributions are evaluated as attention-worthy. If genuinely contingent, such opportunities preclude the teacher from being certain that students will understand the lesson in the intended way. Instead, the teacher must find her own affordances (van Lier, 2002) to teach just as much as the students must find them to learn. This is what Lusine does in her interactions with the students. Not being able to anticipate what their responses will be, she must pay close attention to whatever they give her, while looking for an opportunity to shift her (and the students’') focus from the ideas in the discussion to the aim of the lesson. Thus while Lusine has planned a kind of framework for her lesson in that she has a goal and materials and an activity, the teaching and learning occur in the unplanned exchanges, in the interactions among teacher and students. Again, the teacher integrates aims established in the external view of teaching and interactions occurring in the internal view of teaching.

What is also of interest in Lusine’s account is her progress from her early teaching experiences in which planning was based on conscious imitation of her own English teacher to what she now describes as conscious understanding of the principles of communicative language teaching. Lusine moved from being conscious that her English teacher’s practices were effective (and therefore worthy of imitation) to being conscious of why her English teacher’s practices were effective. She is an example of a teacher who acquired certain practices without understanding them. She then acquired a theoretical understanding of those practices, which enabled her to become aware of why those practices were effective and how to employ them even more effectively in her classroom. This was, by Lusine’s account, a conscious process. It was through formal study and practicum observations in the TEFL Certificate programme that Lusine came to understand why those practices were effective.

In summary, most of the participants seem to outline their lessons, leaving room for the spontaneous contributions of students and options for changing activities in response to student interests and needs, although to different degrees. This suggests that the participants’ beliefs and practices have undergone dramatic changes from those they perceived themselves as being encouraged (if not required) to hold during their Soviet undergraduate Practicum course. What is most interesting in the participants’ comments, however, is the interplay between
planning and planned versus spontaneous teaching. Although all of the participants made much of the importance of having clear aims and appropriate plans for lessons, both of which are established external to the classroom, the actual execution of those aims through making choices internal to the classroom involves reacting to a variety of cues. Three of the participants’ descriptions of teacher planning and planned versus spontaneous teaching are noteworthy. First, Nune’s efforts to describe choosing between activities before class suggest that although a teacher may know the aims of a lesson, the actual choices of activities may sometimes be based not on conscious analysis, but on a holistic feel for what will work in a particular situation. Her very detailed description of integrating plans with spontaneous decisions is suggestive of Eraut’s rapid reflection (1994) and Schon’s reflection-in-action (1987). Second, Zara describes bringing ‘unconscious’ thoughts from ‘deep’ in her mind when she explains how she decides to allow unplanned topics and activities to become a part of her otherwise planned lessons. This is similarly suggestive of rapid reflection and reflection-in-action. Third, Lusine’s teaching history moves from planning lessons around activities which she did not really understand to planning lessons with knowledge of both why she intends to use those activities and why those activities are effective in meeting her aims. This knowledge is based on her understanding of the theoretical foundations of practices and processes acquired in TEFL Certificate classroom courses and Practicum course. In short, multiple sources of knowledge, both theoretical and personal, inform the participants’ beliefs and practices.

Teaching Language

Many of the participants’ beliefs about learning are reflected in their beliefs about teaching as well as their teaching practices. This is particularly true of teaching grammar. Grammar is one area that all of the teachers addressed during the classroom observations, although to varying degrees. Teaching listening and speaking skills occurred in several classes, and opportunities for listening and speaking occurred in all classes even when it was not the focus of lessons. Therefore the examination of teaching practices in this section will be limited to these areas. (It should also be noted that other sections of this chapter have included
other aspects of teaching, such as phonetics and writing.) This section will be organized by these skills.

**Teaching grammar**

It is difficult to determine to what extent the participants’ grammar teaching practices can be attributed to information on how to teach grammar from their Soviet undergraduate Practical Grammar course. As was mentioned in Chapter Four, Zara describes the purpose of Practical Grammar as how to teach grammar, while Hasmik describes it as what grammar to teach. However, the participants themselves recognize that they gained considerable knowledge of how to teach English language grammar from their language courses, which would include the Theoretical and Practical Grammar courses as well as more general language courses described in Chapter Four. As has already been mentioned, most of the participants describe their language education as very form-focused or ‘traditional’; many make explicit reference to the grammar-translation method. The situation is further complicated by the Theoretical and Practical Pedagogy courses, in particular the Practical Pedagogy course, where several participants describe being taught the grammar-translation method. Furthermore, some of the participants appear to have been influenced by the conscious-practical method from their Practical Pedagogy course. (As noted above in the section *Classroom Language Learning*, there is some overlap between these two sections. Here the focus is on how beliefs about teaching influence the practices of the participants.)

Nune, the participant with the most exposure to a Soviet education, and the only one to have completed her undergraduate education before Armenian independence, was also perhaps the most ‘traditional’ in her grammar teaching, at least with older learners. As was described above, Nune was also teaching in the state school system with its required textbooks and annual examinations, and so worked under considerable constraints. It is therefore not surprising that Nune’s lessons also offered very explicit grammar instruction, and also regularly included translation (which was also included on the annual examinations) as is shown in this thematically organized lesson on friendship with a group of high school students.

1. T: Before we start today's lesson ‘that's what friends are for’, that's (xx) topic for our discussion from what's in our textbook in our syllabus used for the 9th grade, would you tell me some proverbs, some general thoughts, connected with this idea of friendship? What is it for you? And keep in mind proverbs connected with it. Yes, Lilian?
2. S: Friends are very important for us.
3. T: Sorry, so you didn't catch my meaning. I would like to know whether you know any proverbs. What is a proverb?
4. S: (in Armenian)
5. T: OK, so can you tell me a proverb connected with friendship?
6. S: A friend in need is a friend in deed.
7. T: OK, go and write on the board.
8. T: A friend in need is a friend in deed. So can you tell me a Russian or Armenian (xx) connected with this proverb? Can you tell me how to translate this into Armenian?
9. S: (in Armenian)
10. T: Good, and one more in Russian.
11. S: (in Russian)
12. T: Very good. (Repeats praise in Armenian.)

In this excerpt Nune uses translation in two ways: first, at line 3, to clarify a part of the instructions which one student has apparently misunderstood, and second, at turns 8 and 10, for its own sake (and, presumably, the examinations’ sake). Nune explained that she uses translation with students because ‘they get to know about the rules of the elements of translation’ (Olp4), that is, for its own sake. She also believes it improves the understanding of grammar, in particular word order. This may possibly be demonstrated in the excerpt on p. 193, where Nune helps her students construct sentences in English from the Armenian. Such views almost certainly come from her own background as a school pupil and as an undergraduate language student rather than from the TEFL Certificate programme.

Nune also made use of explicit grammar explanations, as is shown in the following excerpt from later in the same class on friendship.

T: OK then. Let's see. Look at the board and you will see some grammar material connected with this section describing a person. These two words [indicating 'so' and 'such'] are only used in English and so the criteria for having the definition for these words are the following. The 'so' is used with an adjective or an adverb and after it comes the clause, subordinate clause. For example, the example that is mentioned here is ‘He’s so clever’, adjective form, ‘that’ and subject-verb, ‘I’d like to make friends with him’. Another example with 'such' word, you see that 'such' is followed by adjective, noun or only noun, and the common form for remembering the difference between these two ways is the usage of the noun. That's why general example is just created on this one, the first one, ‘He’s such a clever boy’. Here the distinguishable word is ‘boy’, ‘that I’d like to make friends with him’. So now we’re going to have some practice. I'm going to give you the charts, papers, take one. These two words and try to fill them up, write on them 'so' or 'such', (xx), OK, OK.

This explanation, based on two minimally different sentences, involves considerable metalinguistic terminology. The practice exercise required students to fill in blanks in sentences with the target forms. This is a rather traditional present-practice lesson (there was no production of the target), and again, it is probable that the grammar explanation was of the sort
with which Nune was familiar from her language background. Furthermore, this type of explanation for upper level students accords with Nune’s belief that inductive instruction is effective with younger students, while deductive instruction can be effective (as well as inductive instruction) for older students. In particular, this is not the kind of grammar lesson which her TEFL Certificate practicum course mentors, one of whom very strongly believed in CLT, would have condoned.

Varsenik was teaching a reading and vocabulary course at Premier Institute; her students had a separate grammar course, so she tried to avoid focusing on grammar. However, she did use some grammar-focused speaking exercises in the textbooks for controlled and guided practice. For example, one class ended with a textbook exercise on hypotheticals. Grammar also came up incidentally. In both cases, ‘if they have requested a grammar rule I’ll ask them first to explain it and if they have a good explanation I usually [accept] it’ (Olp3). In fact, Varsenik did precisely this in the exercise on hypotheticals. As soon as a student had a question about the ‘rule’, Varsenik turned it back to the students until a satisfactory version of the ‘rule’ was given. According to Varsenik, her general approach to teaching language focuses on vocabulary development and structures.

At first there is the structure of the language and then I explain the words, the vocabulary. I try to say the history of the language and I try to indicate the context of the material. If it is known it may be better for them to remember that. They remember it better than if they just read (Olp3).

She attributed this approach to her Soviet undergraduate education.

As with Varsenik, the focus of the lessons I observed with Hasmik was not on grammar, although it did come up incidentally. While discussing her student’s TOEFL practice essay (she described the focus as on rhetorical patterns and development techniques), the following exchange occurred.

((The student is reading her essay aloud; the teacher periodically stops her to comment.))

1. S: Young people will teach enthusiastically. He or she try to find the new materials, try to use innovations.
2. T: OK, be attentive once more. He or she-
4. T: Will try, OK, or tries.
5. S: No, will try.
6. T: OK, will try there.
7. S: Will try or tries. And try to use innovations. For example, my brother is a teacher of history. In his lessons he try to show just the position between two things from ancient times and nowadays.
8. T: You should say from-to. From ancient times-
In this excerpt Hasmik hears the error the student has made at turn 1, but when the student’s attention is drawn to it she corrects it not as if it were a subject-verb agreement error, but as if it were a tense error (turn 3). The teacher offers confirmation of that correction as well as offering a correction of the error as a subject-verb agreement error (turn 4). When the student makes the same error again (turn 7), however, Hasmik intervenes again. When the student again attempts to correct the error as if it were a tense error, Hasmik immediately offers a metalinguistic prompt: ‘Or if you use present simple’ (turn 14). This appears to have the effect of focusing the student’s attention. She then conjugates the verb correctly (turn 15). Hasmik confirms the correction and then asks the student why she has made the error. (This is typical of many Armenian teachers whom I have observed, and appears to be a way of focusing the student’s attention on her lack of attention to the target. While it appears to be seeking an explanation, the student herself well understands that the real purpose of the question is to suggest the student’s culpability in making the error, and she responds to it as such, albeit in a good-humoured way.)

This use of explicit grammar knowledge is very much a part of the form-focused instruction that all the participants refer to in describing their own language lessons. Hasmik herself has very strong views about the importance of grammar which she discusses here by describing her husband’s English.

I think grammar is the core. It’s just material that you should have in order to build something, like building a house. And so you can’t do without the grammar. Because you can have fluent learners, like no grammar approaches they had. They worked just on fluency, but their language is very poor in grammar. Like my husband. He’s very fluent. In what sense? That he can say just chunks of sentences. His pronunciation is OK, but he can’t say a single grammatically correct sentence if he wants to say that. Right before your coming he said, ‘I will tell Anne that you don’t want to give my pen. I’ll said to her, ‘Don’t give my pen’.” And I understand but he can’t recognize. ‘You know, if you say the same thing to Anne, it’s just that you’re ordering her not to give the pen’.
think this was because he was abroad. He lived there but he doesn’t have any grammar instruction (Olp4).

Hasmik stated that what her husband was lacking was ‘explicit grammar rules’ (Olp4). It is clear that she believes that the lack of such instruction is the reason why her husband cannot communicate effectively in English.

Hasmik attributes her strong belief in the necessity of explicit grammar instruction to both her language education as a pupil and her pedagogical education as an undergraduate, as the next passage relates.

And so good structures are only through grammar use, grammar instruction. You know when I was taught the language at the first lesson it was said, ‘We are writing present indefinite tense’. And I wondered what it was. ’This is a tense you should know. You know that this tense is this in English and this is just what you do or what you always do’. And she said, ‘I live in X’, at that time I lived in X, a small town, and I took it for granted. And then she said that if you want to say that something is going at the moment you say, ‘I am eating’, not ‘I eat’ again. I took it for granted, but to tell the truth, although I did very well on my entrance examinations and I was admitted to [Premier Institute], I knew that my scores were very high, but in case if I met a native speaker I would never be able to speak with him or her. And this opportunity was when I was on my second year and I met a native speaker and found that I wasn’t able to utter a word in English although my grammar was perfect…I was introduced to different structures, like different aspects of English morphology, grammar, theoretical grammar, linguistics, history of the language, and so I thought that my focus is only on the form (Olp4-5).

Although Hasmik admits in this passage that her language education left her unprepared for speaking, there is an implicit comparison between her husband’s language education and ability and her own language education and ability. According to Hasmik (and as the example she gives illustrates), her husband’s naturalistic language learning has resulted in language so ungrammatical that he can actually end up saying the opposite of what he intends. In her own case, however, Hasmik was able to successfully overcome her difficulty in speaking, and, more to the point, she believes she was successful because she was able to build on her grammatical knowledge.

Like Hasmik, Zara, who was teaching in a private language programme, also used explicit grammar instruction techniques, as the following excerpt shows.

((Students are reading aloud fill-in-the-blank sentences from an exercise in an Anglo-American textbook; the teacher comments on the one that has just been correctly given.))

1. T: Do you think, which is more important, that it is over or that it is still going on?
2. S: We should use future continuous.
3. T: OK, yes, we should use future continuous. But if you use future perfect the meaning changes, that’s why I’m asking. Do you think it is important if it is ongoing action or whether it is over? Ongoing?
4. SS: Ongoing.
This exercise is followed by a discussion of the students' own ideas about the future, and then another exercise from the textbook. At the end of the exercise, there is the following exchange.

1. T: What about 'will be doing' and 'will have done'? So this is for the last time, the difference between 'will be doing' and 'will have done'. Technically it is one can choose to use the future continuous in one case and the future perfect in another. Yes. So if we want to say it is still ongoing action, then we will use—
2. SS: Future continuous.
3. T: Yes. If I want to say it is over, ended, concluded, finished, then we will use—
4. SS: Future perfect.

There is a considerable amount of explicit discussion and metalinguistic terminology, with Zara's class of adult learners very much involved in producing such explanations and using such terminology. It is interesting to note that it is a student who introduces the metalanguage (turn 2), suggesting their comfort with such practices.

Zara stated that her approach to teaching grammar comes from her Soviet undergraduate education. Having attributed 20% of her beliefs about teaching to her undergraduate education, she clarified it, saying, 'this 20% can be grammar that I had because the grammar, it's just like the same everywhere, no matter where you study' (OIp17). Nor is she restricting herself to grammar knowledge; she is also referring to pedagogical knowledge. As she puts it, 'My education was a product of Soviet (to be more exact Russian) pedagogy, so everything I taught there was appropriate to my education (books, additional materials, ideology)' (I1Q2). In fact, it would be difficult to imagine that she was uninfluenced by it, since Zara taught Grammar, Phonetics, and General English for three years at Provincial Institute.

Zara recognizes that she teaches grammar explicitly and that she knows how to do so from her Soviet undergraduate education. However, she is also aware of other approaches to grammar teaching. She recounted a lesson by a TEFL Certificate student teacher who was assigned to her class for teaching practice (although not under Zara's supervision). Zara describes the student teacher's inductive approach to grammar teaching as very different from her own.

For example...I had a student from TEFL who came to have her practicum in my course and she explained grammar in the way, you know how to say it, she did it in lots of examples, I mean she did it wonderfully. For me it was a very good change to see how my teaching of grammar was different from the way she does (Olp19)
And as Zara said of the inductive approach used by the TEFL student doing her practice teaching, ‘I may try that way of teaching grammar in my class and I am sure that it will be OK’ (OIp19). However, as Zara’s other comments on the same lesson suggest (cited above in the section Classroom Language Learning), a good part of such decisions involves her awareness of her students’ attitudes. She is well aware that what works with one class may not work with another.

This attitude suggests flexibility and openness to new ideas. Furthermore, Zara’s belief in the value of explicit grammar teaching does not preclude a belief in communicative language teaching, either. Zara also believes that communicative language teaching and direct language teaching have roles to play in grammar teaching, especially in learning not to rely on translation.

Some people don’t, they can’t come out of the structure of their native language. And it is a lack for them not understanding the structure. That is why I like this communicative and direct approach, using both of them. Like, you should pick up English in an English environment, like don’t talk by putting everything into Armenian because you are getting a lot of confusion from first language (OIp23).

It appears, then, that Zara’s grammar teaching has been influenced by several sources, and her teaching choices are at least partly made on the basis of her beliefs about her students. This is therefore connected to her beliefs about individual learner differences which, as has already been suggested, come from the TEFL Certificate programme. Zara’s explicit ‘Soviet’ grammar teaching, although similar in its practice to that of Hasmik and Nune, is different in its position in her personal practical theory. She appears to have a different understanding of the role of explicit grammar teaching as not necessarily the only or best approach, but as the most familiar and successful approach for herself and her students, and for that reason an appropriate choice. Her practices in this case, therefore, are strongly influenced by the context in which she teaches.

These three participants have strong beliefs about the importance of explicit grammatical knowledge to language learning that are consistent with the conscious-practical method described in the above section Classroom Language Learning. It should be noted that they do not use grammar-translation or rely on mechanical drills, but rather teach ‘rules’ that reveal form-function mappings, in other words, the ‘algorithms’ Rogova recommends (1975, p. 42). Although they vary considerably in the way they employ these techniques, they are clearly
committed to promoting explicit grammatical knowledge in their students. Furthermore, there are differences in how these beliefs are positioned in their personal practical theories. Hasmik and Nune appear to believe that explicit grammar teaching is the preferred (or possibly only) approach, while Zara is more open to other possibilities.

Lusine, teaching graduate business students at Graduate University, had a different approach to teaching grammar. However, as she herself pointed out, she was also teaching advanced students who didn’t need much grammar instruction. Instead, as Lusine said, ‘I stress the context where you use the structure’ (OIp5). This also came about because of student reactions to grammar lessons, a reminder of the level of contingency and autonomy that existed for teacher and students alike in Lusine’s classroom.

But then I saw that the lessons, no matter how communicative I would try to make them—they were doing it, they were still involved—but there was not as much enthusiasm as when I do some work on content-rich classes. So I thought I would take a more individual approach and I said since we were doing journal writing if there was anyone who wants me to correct their grammar in their journal I would. And I would point out the grammar, individual items, and if they still cannot correct it I would discuss that with them or...I would pick up things in the journals. If I see there is a persistent thing going on, would discuss that particular item.... That’s how I’ve been working on grammar with them. So far I haven’t had any complaints about that (OIp5).

Grammar also came up in speaking activities. In the final session of the negotiation role play, Lusine asks for a student to volunteer ‘to analyze the whole negotiation process’ including ‘whether direct or indirect communication occurred’ in a feedback session at the end of the role play (LO2p2). When the volunteer analyst and class have finished discussing the negotiations, Lusine brings up a few more points for the class to discuss, including the issue of direct and indirect communication. (Part of it is excerpted above on p. 179-180.) After mentioning a matter of negotiating protocol and clarifying a few collocations, Lusine returned to the use of direct and indirect language by another student.

1. T: ....And when Armen said our time is short, what do you think about this?
2. S: We have to discuss all these points and (xx).
3. S: And when we wrote that we were thinking that we were Americans and time is the most important thing. They go for clock agreement or reach an agreement as fast as they can and they don’t care about socializing and relationships.
4. T: My question is more about, it’s not very clear.
5. S: I think we have to do this in five minutes because the time is short.
6. S: We have a lot of things to do.
7. S: (xx)
8. T: This is a good example of direct-indirect communication. But usually more formal language would be appropriate in a government, in a (xx) negotiation, ‘because time is passing and we’ve got six points’ OK? Or (xx) ‘urgently today we are looking for an agreement’. Very direct communication ‘we have conflict in future’ OK? So make this
‘if we have conflict in future’ using this factor, present conditional, it would be realistic. How can you make it?
10. T: More hypothetical, the appearance of conflict.
11. S: Should conflicts occurred.
12. T: Occurred?
13. S: We had.
15. S: What if we had.
16. S: If we had conflicts.
17. T: Yeah. So first (xx) the hypothetical statement ‘would be’ would make the possibility less probable, right? ‘If some conflicts appeared or if a misunderstanding occurred’.
(LO1p6)

When Lusine tries to focus the students’ attention at turn 1, the students instead respond to the content—a possible indication of how much they are used to a content rather than form focus in their class. At turn 4 she tries again, and students offer alternative language, but still fail to see her point. Finally at turn 8 she has to directly state what she is after. In that turn she gives examples and uses metalanguage to make her point clear. The students respond to this, offering partial answers until at turns 15 and 16 two students come up with the correct structure. Lusine then briefly summarizes the point.

Lusine’s style in addressing this language point is very similar to Zara’s. Both use questions to elicit student responses; both use metalanguage to focus student attention on their conscious knowledge; both focus on form-function mappings rather than form alone. The difference between their lessons is that in Zara’s class the lessons alternate between communicative, meaning-focused activities and focus-on-forms activities. In Lusine’s class the lesson is meaning-focused with only incidental focus-on-form. In this example, the introduction to the task included a very brief pre-emptive focus-on-form (‘Did they concern very formal, formal, informal, can you notice the pattern? Maybe some are less informal, more formal, only the pattern that you can notice’ (LO1p2)) and the feedback on the task included reactive focus-on-form in response to student language. This way of addressing grammar corresponds to Lusine’s strong belief in the effectiveness of communicative language teaching. Although the techniques these two teachers employed are similar, they are embedded in different approaches to addressing grammar teaching.

In this section a number of influences on the participants’ teaching have appeared. First of all, the participants appear to have been influenced by their own grammar learning experiences. All of the participants, including Lusine, acknowledge that this is the source of
their knowledge about English language grammar. To some extent, it also appears to be the source of their knowledge about how to teach grammar, although as has already been pointed out, it is difficult to determine how much came from instruction on how to teach grammar as opposed to knowledge gained through observing their grammar instruction. Second, the participants also appear to have been influenced by pedagogical knowledge. The conscious-practical method appears to have influenced the beliefs of some of the participants to the extent that their espoused beliefs and actual practices are consistent with basic principles of the method. This appears to be true despite the fact that only one of the participants spontaneously mentioned the book that would have been their source for this method. Communicative language teaching has also strongly influenced the grammar teaching of one of the participants in particular.

**Teaching listening**

Listening was the focus of lessons in only some of the participants’ classes, although of course listening occurred in all of them, since all of the classes I observed were conducted primarily (and in some cases exclusively) in English.

Both Hasmik and Zara addressed listening formally. Hasmik was tutoring for the listening section of the TOEFL exam. She employed several techniques that suggest that her beliefs about teaching listening can be attributed to the Teaching Speaking and Listening course in the TEFL Certificate programme.

**TAPE**

A: Listen to part of a class discussion with a political science class.
B: Dr Anderson could you please clarify the requirements for this course? I'm a little bit confused about the final examination.
C: Oh? Well you have two options in this course. You can either take a final examination or you can write a research paper instead.
B: Excuse me Dr Anderson that's the point I needed you to clarify. What kind of research paper did you have in mind? An original study? A report? A book review perhaps?
C: A report. A summary actually based upon current research in the field.
D: How long should the report be?
C: Length is not important but I can see that it would take at least twenty pages in order to develop the topic, however.
D: Should we discuss the topic with you before we begin writing?
C: Not unless you wish. The only requirement is that it relate to current trends in US foreign policy. Are you thinking about the paper Jane?
D: I'm not sure. I think I'd like to hear a little bit more about the examination.
C: All right. One hour of multiple choice questions about both the lectures and the outside readings.
B: Did you say that you'd give us one hour for the examination?
C: Yes I did.
B: I'll go for the paper.
D: Me too.
A: Now get ready to answer the questions. Q1: What prompted the discussion?

1. T: Prompted, that is what was the cause?
2. S: This. ((S indicates choice)).
3. T: Yes (xx).

TAPE
A: Q2: What kind of research paper has Dr Anderson assigned?

4. T: ((S indicates choice.)) Very good.

TAPE
A: Q3: What kind of an examination has Dr Anderson prepared?

5. T: (xx) No. She says multiple choice. If it is an essay examination it means that I suggested a topic and you are writing an answer in the form of an essay.
6. S: Yes, but report was said.
7. T: No. A report is one option. She says you can either write a report or just take an examination-
8. S: Ah, OK.

TAPE
A: Q4: Based on the class discussion, which course does Dr Anderson most probably teach?

9. S: (xx)
10. T: Yes.
11. S: (in Armenian)
12. T: Take home examination, it means that you take the exam and you write it at home.
13. S: Ah. Open?
14. T: No. This is take home examination. Open examination, it means you can discuss the questions, you can use the book, you can use your lectures. An essay examination means you have the question and you have to answer it.
15. S: These, what are these? ((S indicates answer 'multiple choice examination'))
16. T: These are the types of examination. (xx) I have written 500 questions based on the lectures and the readings we have done.
17. S: Ten page report?
18. T: No, the pages is about the report.
20. T: For the course requirements, that is for the conclusion, you have either to write a report or to take an examination.
21. S: Oh.
22. T: So the examinations may be open book, it means you may use the book while writing the answers. It might be essay examination, you are given the topic and you are writing an essay like the essay we did today, but it's about the examination. And the other one is take home, it means you take it and write it at home. And the objective examination is the actual examination you take at the institute. So you are given the questions and you have options or just write the answer. So?
23. S: OK.
(HO2p4)

In this excerpt, after playing the tape, Hasmik focuses the student's attention on the prompt and reminds her of what it means. She allows the student to focus on the task rather than going through everything the speakers say. At turn 9 the student asks a question about one of the
possible answers for the next question. Hasmik indicated that she told her student to look through the questions before listening in order to ‘try to find clues, so in this way I am raising her awareness of the situation that she’s going to get and so now she will be more concentrated’ (OIp8). This supports Hasmik’s belief that language learning is best accomplished through conscious processes. The student is apparently trying to do this here, but discovers she doesn’t know what most of the answer choices mean. A lengthy explanation of the types of examinations possible in the U.S. takes place, suggesting that the student's problem is as much cultural knowledge as listening skills. It is clear that Hasmik tries to provide this type of information, too. Focusing attention, raising awareness, and understanding the context are all techniques Hasmik would have learned in the TEFL certificate programme. They correspond to her beliefs that listening is an important skill, and that communicative language teaching is an effective way to teach listening.

Zara employs similar techniques in her listening lessons, reflecting similar beliefs about the importance of listening and effectiveness of communicative language teaching. She also ensures that there are pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities, as she was taught to do in the TEFL Certificate programme. She begins by making sure the students understand the activity they are supposed to do, asking the students to explain what is required (turn 1) and making sure they understand the key word (turn 3). Like Hasmik, Zara also believes that student awareness is important for learning.

1. T: Now, let’s go to p. 68. We are going to listen to an important event. We are going to listen to three people discussing an important event in their lives and complete this chart. So what are the two questions that you are going to answer?
2. S: What was it?
3. T: So what was the event and how did it affect him or her. What does affect mean? How did it affect? How did it-
4. SS: [Cause.
5. SS: [(xx)
6. T: What is (xx)? (xx) an event. So we have Charlie, Henry and Debbie.

TAPE
2. Henry. I’m a twin and my twin brother and I have always been very close. We always did everything together. And we were never apart for any time at all until we were 18. Then we went to different colleges in different towns and that was the first time we had ever really had to cope on our own. I think it was good in a way because we both became more confident and independent. Until then I had always had my brother to depend on whenever I ran into a problem. But once I went away to college I realized I was actually capable of working things out on my own.

7. T: So? What is he talking about?
9. T: (xx)
10. S: One (xx)
11. T: Yes, yes. So he has a twin brother. What was the turning point for both of them maybe, or maybe for only him.
12. SS: [When he went to college
13. SS: [Was alone.
14. T: And what was the situation before that? Was he ever apart from his brother?
15. SS: No.
16. S: [He was depend his.
17. T: So his brother was more independent.
18. S: Yes
19. T: And he was more dependent on his-
20. SS: On his brother.
21. T: How did he cope with this situation? ((T replays first sentence.))
22. T: How was he with his brother?
23. SS: They were every close. ((T replays second sentence.))
24. SS: We did everything together. ((T replays third sentence.))
25. SS: [Never alone.
26. SS: [Never apart.
27. T: Yes, the brothers were very dependent on each other. ((T replays fourth sentence.))
28. T: So what made this change?
29. SS: [Going to college
30. SS: [College.
31. T: At what age?
32. SS: [18
33. S: [19.
34. T: 19?
35. SS: 18.
36. T: OK, age 18. They went to different colleges so they had to live apart. ((T replays fifth sentence.))
37. S: He was dependant.
38. T: So when he ran into a problem he depended on his-
39. SS: Brother. ((T replays to end.))
40. T: And what did he understand once he was at college?
41. S: [He was capable.
42. S: [Working.
43. T: That he was capable-
44. SS: [Solving problems.
45. SS: [Himself.
46. T: Yeah, himself.

At turn 7 Zara gets the students to set the general scene and then goes to the first question which the students quickly answer correctly. Because of the difficulty some students had had with the second question on the previous tape (one of them had complained about how difficult it was), Zara goes through the second question very carefully. Rather than asking them for the answer right away, she replays the tape sentence by sentence. This establishes the crucial factor, that Henry had been dependent before he went to college, so that the effect college had on him—becoming independent—makes sense. By asking these questions Zara ultimately leads the students to the answer for the second question, at turn 41-42. Of particular note is the how Zara makes use of recasts. The first place is at turn 17, when a correct response but
incorrect form is used by a student in turn 16. In a sense Zara recasts it again (at turn 19), as it
is not clear whether the student needed to use ‘dependent’ or ‘independent’ in her answer. The
recasts are done in such a way that they clarify the meaning of the words and of the listening
text, by going through which brother was independent and which brother was dependent. At
turn 27 Zara again recasts a correct answer to make use of the word ‘dependent’. The payoff is
at turn 37 when a student uses the word correctly. This is followed up with a question to make
sure the meaning is clear. The final recast is at turn 43, and functions to clarify which of the
responses given by students was correct, and perhaps also to draw out a little more information
as well as ensure that everyone understood the answer.

Zara described the approach she uses for listening.

Usually for listening we just listen for general ideas, for main ideas, like we did to
understand what it’s about. And for the first time it’s just enough. Because there are
some people who understand more and others less. For the second time it’s more for
details, checking vocabulary...special sentences and special expressions I want to draw
their attention to, and I want them to hear the whole sentence that way. Because
there’s no use consecutive times. It would be better if you learn it like that.... It’s better
that way than just words in isolation (Olp9).

This is very much in keeping with what she learned about teaching listening in the TEFL
Certificate programme: giving students a task to do, checking that they understand how to do
the task, listening first for main ideas and then for details. Her focus on a single vocabulary item
that was essential for understanding the text was manageable for the students, and the means
by which she promoted understanding of that item was clearly effective. These practices
suggest that Zara believes that students need to be able to control their learning by being aware
of specific learning targets. Furthermore, her approach was in keeping with her beliefs about the
importance of being sensitive to the quiet, shy students. She reinforced correct answers so that
students who had not gotten them correct realized they were wrong without being made the
focus of attention. None of her questions was ever met with silence—students appeared to feel
comfortable about trying, despite their admitted difficulty with understanding.

None of the other participants addressed listening formally in the classes I observed,
although it was incorporated into lessons in that they were conducted in English, thus providing
students with opportunities to listen to English. Worth mentioning was Nune’s use of what some
might consider excessive teacher talk time. Nune did not have prepared listening materials to
use in her classes or the equipment to use them (or make them). She pointed out, ‘The only
person to whom they listen to or adapt as an English speaker is their teacher’ (I7Q1). Thus Nune was her students’ main form of listening practice.

Nune described several communicative listening activities she did with her students, such as this one.

We tried this game. And half of the students left the classroom and for example five of them stayed inside...and I said, ‘Be attentive, I am going to tell you a secret story about myself. I don’t want them to know about it’, and I told one of them. ‘If you want, OK, let him know about it’, and then he told and then, so fine. So we all five know about it. ‘Now’ I say, ‘one of you come here’. Each one should tell the next one and then the last student, then he comes and I say, ‘Would you tell me what I told you’ and quite a different story [it] is (OIp5).

Besides games, Nune also addressed listening throughout her lessons. There was a striking difference between the way Nune spoke to her lower level and higher level students. Although imitation-response-feedback exchanges with teacher repetition of student answers predominated in both of the classes I observed, the length and complexity of Nune’s turns differed markedly. With lower level students her responses to students tended to be short, simple sentences. However, when giving instructions and explanations her turns tended to be somewhat longer and more complex. In effect, the short, simple turns may have encouraged students through example to offer similar sentences which they could conceivably produce, while her longer, more complex turns during instructions and explanations offered increased opportunities for real-time processing of authentic language. (Sometimes these lengthier explanations were repeated in Armenian, however.) With her higher level students her responses were both longer and more complex, as were her instructions and explanations. There were also several extended explanations, one on grammar (cited above) which would be very much in keeping with what the students could expect in tertiary English classes, and several on the theme of the lesson, friendship. In fact the lesson ended with several minutes of monologue. While this may seem poor use of class time from the speaking perspective, it did offer the students an opportunity to hear an extended piece of discourse on a topic with which they were familiar and about which they appeared to be genuinely interested. Since the participants themselves identify listening as the area least addressed but most challenging for their students, there is considerable reason to find such monologues a good use of class time. Furthermore, the differences between how Nune spoke to different age groups reflects her belief that different age groups have different learning capabilities. Nune’s practices, which
perhaps might not be regarded by everyone as entirely consistent with her professed belief in Western communicative language teaching, are perhaps more coherent: an individually developed approach that is sensitive to her learners’ needs as well as the constraints of her teaching situation.

*Teaching speaking*

Like listening, speaking was a planned part of only some of the lessons, although opportunities for students to speak occurred in all of the participants’ lessons. There was considerable variety in the way speaking was dealt with. Hasmik’s tutoring for the TOEFL exam precluded any ‘official’ attention to speaking, although Hasmik strongly encouraged her student to speak English. Since the tutorial was conducted in English for the most part, the student clearly had opportunities to speak English. The excerpt in the section on grammar teaching offers a glimpse of the student engaging in genuine communication at turn 17 with her response to a correction being the rhetorical ‘I’m wrong?’ (See p. 28.)

Two of the participants whose classes I observed, Varsenik and Nune, had difficulty engaging their students in genuinely communicative activities despite their professed beliefs in its importance. In both cases students used the opportunities they were given to plan their speaking to write and recite or memorize. While this was not true of all of the students, it appeared to be true of the majority of them. Varsenik addressed the issue, saying, ‘I tried to do it, to tell them, to ask them to, how to do it, not to read them, not to read’ (Ol1p11) without much result. However, Varsenik did manage to sometimes succeed; the warmer for one lesson I observed did involve the students in genuine communication.

Well I was talking to them about that artist you know, so in some way they knew about it. So I asked them if they knew her art and brought in a calendar of that artist... they are interested in art, especially as I have told them about the artist. They tried to see her paintings. I promised to take them to her studio (Ol1p10-11).

Besides looking over the calendar and talking about it, the class also discussed arrangements for visiting the studio together. The students spoke freely, and while the conversation did not remain entirely in English—in particular, exchanges among the students quickly reverted to Armenian—it was a genuinely meaningful, authentic, and contingent conversation. Perhaps the friendliness, the informality, and the student interest made this ‘normal’ conversation possible in a way that recognizable classroom activities did not. Varsenik also exploited the presence of an
observer in the classroom, beginning one class and ending both classes by giving the students an opportunity to converse with me about my impressions of Armenia, Armenian and American customs, and, of course, America’s role in foreign affairs—all topics the students themselves introduced. This practice reflects Varsenik’s belief that teachers need to be flexible and offer variety in their lessons.

Nune addressed speaking through discussions such as the one on friendship above (see p. 168-69), a lesson which Nune described as ‘a communication lesson’ (Olp2). Her description of this practice would appear to accord with her espoused belief that communicative language teaching is a ‘better way of teaching’ (Olp7). The discussion began, however, with a vocabulary focus—‘So let’s find some expressions which are given for this’—and a pre-emptive focus on form—‘And you use should or shouldn’t with these verbs’. Under these constraints the discussion was actually a practice exercise and both students and teacher treated it as such.

Virtually all exchanges followed the initiation-response-feedback format, with the teacher often repeating what students said. There was little to no response to the content of the students’ responses, although there was some attempt to get students to expand their answers. Some of these attempts appeared, however, to be aimed at getting something useful for the chart on the blackboard, as in the following exchange.

1. S: To chat with me.
2. T: Uh huh, uh huh. If a friend shares his opinion or thoughts with our friend maybe he—
3. S: He can keep our secrets.
4. T: Yes, should keep our secrets. Write it down, it’s one of the positive qualities.... (NO1p1)

The student’s original idea, which on the surface does appear to be a positive quality some of us expect in our friends, was not quite what Nune was looking for, as well as being given in the ‘wrong’ form, as Nune’s recast makes clear. Although students spontaneously volunteered their ideas, there was little that was genuinely communicative about this lesson. A later discussion reinforced this. The discussion was supposed to be students telling anecdotes about their friends. Some of the students appeared to read aloud stories they had previously composed, while others appeared to be reciting them from memory. Again, there was very little that appeared communicative. However, students did have the opportunity to speak, and a few of them made use of those opportunities to speak spontaneously. It was, perhaps, more akin to a
communication practice lesson. The reluctance of many of the students to take up a possible opportunity for genuine communication suggests that Nune’s practices may well reflect her belief that students should be treated as individuals who have a certain amount of input into the way class is conducted. It is also possible that Nune understands that the particular group of students simply did not yet feel ready for genuine communication (or were uncomfortable with the presence of an observer); by offering guided practice and allowing time to prepare, Nune could be acting in accordance with her belief that students learn step by step, and therefore should not be asked to do that for which they are not yet ready. The fact that it appeared that those who enthusiastically volunteered were regularly called upon, while those who did not volunteer were only occasionally called upon, is further evidence that Nune’s lesson reflected her sensitivity to her students’ personalities and learning curves as well as her belief that developing speaking skills was important. It suggests that in this case Nune’s practices may have been influenced by her understanding of the very specific context of a particular group of students.

Zara and Lusine both had classrooms where considerable meaningful, authentic, and contingent communication occurred. As noted with their grammar teaching, despite employing similar practices resulting in similar outcomes, they had very different overall approaches.

Zara, constrained by having to complete a textbook with a notional/structural syllabus, but strongly motivated by her own belief in the importance of authentic communication with her students, opted to separate focus-on-forms activities from genuinely communicative activities. An example of a genuinely communicative exchange is given above in the section on individual learning differences (see p. 178) where most of the exchanges were actually between the students. Although the general direction of the discussion was established by Zara, many of the more specific topics were introduced by students. The genuineness of the interactions is shown in how no correction occurred, and Zara’s clarification requests included no expectation that they would be followed up with anything more than was needed to maintain communication. This corresponds to Zara’s belief that during speaking activities, there shouldn’t be much error correction. The only ‘teacherly’ moment was her pointed involvement of Hovik, and it was of such a nature that most of us can no doubt recall equally halting exchanges while trying to bring out a reticent guest at the dinner table. The extent of Zara’s commitment to genuine
communication—the way in which she has embraced it such that it informs her practices throughout the lesson and not just during specified teaching events—is also evident in the excerpt given above where a focus-on-forms production practice activity included contingent exchanges (see p. 217-218). The fact that she combined this with focus-on-forms, which is in accordance with her beliefs about the nature of language learning, suggests that Zara is a teacher who has developed her own personal practical theory of teaching from a variety of sources such that theories and practices are well-integrated.

Lusine, relatively free from constraints at Graduate University and clear in her beliefs, has also created a genuinely communicative classroom that also attends to her students’ needs for a teacher’s knowledge and guidance. The first of Lusine’s classes which I observed was mostly unguided, uninterrupted exchanges between students in a negotiation role play, followed by a mostly student-led feedback session. As with Zara’s class, while the teacher initially set the overall direction, the students determined the more specific topics. A brief example of the role play itself, in which the teacher did not ever intervene, shows what was going on between the students. (The excerpt is of one team planning their negotiating strategy; it is impossible to understand the recording of the students actually negotiating.)

1. S1: I mean I like the idea they can give up, we can go for 45%.
2. S2: But then we still have the problem with the contract.
3. S3: Also if we have 45%, we can have (xx), like if they don’t say something (xx).
4. SS: (xxxx)
5. S1: OK, we can do this, we can. That’s why—across the country it can be used for something else.

(LO1p3)

The feedback session that concluded the role play was led by a student until the final few minutes, in which Lusine ensured that points the feedback session had not yet covered were addressed, included the language point (see p. 179-180 for the teacher-led portion). In another class which I observed, what might have appeared teacher-centred to an observer casually walking past the classroom, was in fact very student-centred with genuine and authentic exchanges (see p. 221-222). Again, although the teacher set the overall topic, students volunteered their own perspectives on that topic. Furthermore, the students feel comfortable enough to cut off Lusine’s instructions in a reversal of the usual classroom interaction patterns (see’ turns 6-7). Lusine’s class, like Zara’s, offers opportunities for the students to engage in genuine communication.
In her teaching, Lusine appears to have fully adopted a strong form of the communicative language teaching method which had been presented to her in the TEFL Certificate programme and reinforced by her MA studies. She states that she committed herself to communicative language teaching from the very beginning of her TEFL Certificate studies and continued her studies with an MA because ‘I felt like I wanted to know more about the underlying theories’. In embracing communicative language teaching, however, she was also responding to the perceived deficiencies and opportunities of her own language learning and early language teaching. Lusine, like Zara, appears to have a consistent and coherent personal practical theory of teaching in which beliefs and practices from a variety of sources are well-integrated.

**Summary of teaching language**

In this section the participants’ beliefs and practices in three areas of English language teaching—grammar, listening, and speaking—have been considered. The participants have a variety of beliefs in these areas, some of which are supported in their practices. Several of the participants—Hasmik, Varsenik, Nune, and Zara—believe in explicitly teaching grammar. This appears to have been influenced by their personal experiences learning grammar, what they were taught about teaching grammar in their undergraduate pedagogical education, and their teaching experiences, especially the expectations and responses of their students to different ways of teaching grammar. One participant, Lusine, has also been strongly influenced by the same sources, but in a different direction: Lusine approaches grammar within a task-based syllabus, appearing to mostly treat it incidentally and reactively in response to her perception of student needs. Listening is acknowledged by all of the participants as an important skill based on the perceived deficiencies of their own learning experiences, and appears to be taught based on what they learned in the TEFL Certificate programme, although constrained by their teaching situations. Thus Hasmik focuses exclusively on providing the necessary information for succeeding on the listening portion of the TOEFL examination; Zara makes use of the tapes that accompany her textbook, although she also tailors the activities to her students’ responses and offers genuinely communicative opportunities; Nune uses teacher talk time to provide her students with their only opportunity for extended listening practice. Speaking is also dealt with
differently by the participants. While most of them profess belief in meaningful and genuine communication (again, in response to the perceived deficiencies of their own learning experiences, but reinforced by the TEFL Certificate programme), only two of them—Zara and Lusine—actually succeed in regularly achieving genuine communication in their classrooms. However, the others do appear to try to create opportunities for genuine communication, even succeeding occasionally. Again, it appears that the constraints of their teaching situations—in particular student expectations that they should be prepared for examinations—makes it difficult to convince students of the importance of genuine communication, although it also appears that these teachers have certainly tried to create opportunities to practice their beliefs. In these cases, different influences appear to have created tensions between the beliefs and practices of the participants, whereas Zara and Lusine appear to have integrated their beliefs and practices, albeit in rather different ways. Thus a variety of influences appear responsible for both the beliefs and the practices of the participants, although the resources and constraints of their teaching situations appear to play a very large role in what they can practically achieve in their classrooms.

Reflecting

In this section the participants’ beliefs and practices about reflecting will be considered. Reflection is regarded as an important element in teaching by a number of authors. Both Schon’s reflection-in-action (1987) and Eraut’s rapid reflection (1994) are not merely terms for proceduralized classroom practices, but involve considered examination of classroom practices as well. This can be self-reflection, reflection prompted by student reactions, or reflection prompted by observers; in all cases, feedback offers the content for reflection. Ellis (1999) offers the distinction between the internal or classroom view of teaching and the external view of teaching, the time in which planning, discussing, and even learning offer opportunities for reflection. Many other authors—Ur, Richards, Crandall, Prabhu, Kumaravadivelu—also refer to the role that reflection can play in teacher development, such as changing practices and developing personal practical theories. In particular, Freeman mentions that ‘articulation and reflection are complementary processes’ (2002, p. 10) in teachers understanding their experiences.
The participants considered the role of reflection from several perspectives. First, reflection is important simply in order to make practices available for consideration. Second, reflection enables evaluation of performance. In particular the participants were concerned with whether they met their objectives and how students reacted. Third, reflection was connected to planning. Finally, some of the participants used it to change their practices by successfully testing hypotheses, what Ur calls (after Kolb, 1984) active experimentation (1992) and what Ellis calls (after Stenhouse, 1975) provisional specifications (1997a). These will each be considered in turn.

First, Zara raised the issue of ensuring that classroom events were available for analysis. Zara pointed out that without reflection she would ‘lose’ what happened in class. Indeed, it is the ‘unconscious things’ of which Zara says ‘I push them forward’ from ‘deep in my mind’, (described above) that are a particular focus of post-class reflection: ‘I ask, ‘Did they work, or not?’’ (Ol27).

Second, meeting objectives, whether from the perspective of completing the planned activities or from the perspective of students (appearing) to have uptake, was an important topic for post-class reflection. Successful classes could also prompt reflection, however. Success was judged in terms of student learning, student enjoyment, and student involvement. Hence Varsenik wrote, ‘After the lesson I usually think if the lesson was successful. If it was effective. What the students have learnt. If they enjoyed the lesson’ (I7Q1). Zara also specified what a successful class included: ‘successful classes are the ones when I have all my students maximally engaged in the class’ (I7Q1). Positive feelings accompanied these lessons, and were tied to student involvement. As Nune mentioned, ‘There are many times when I am satisfied with what I did during the lesson and the interactions with the students were perfect’ (I7Q1).

Reflection appeared to occur most frequently, however, when objectives weren’t met. Zara, Hasmik, Varsenik, Nune, and Lusine mentioned ‘failure’ as prompting reflection. Nune wrote, ‘After having the class I think about the result of the lesson, whether I managed to reach the aim of the lesson or was something incomplete’ (I7Q1). Hasmik mentioned the negative

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feelings that accompany unsuccessful lessons, writing that if ‘the results are frustrating I try to
go back mentally and analyze what might have done or been wrong’ (I7Q1). Lusine did so as well: ‘I feel that there were things I could have done better and I have remorse because I
haven’t been able to amend things when I noticed’ (I7Q1). But ‘failure’ was also tied to self-
 improvement. As Varsenik wrote, through reflection she noticed ‘where I was mistaken [so as]
not to repeat it again’ (I7Q1). Nune was quite explicit about the importance of reflection: ‘If the
teacher is not reflective then I think there won’t be any progress’ (Olp13). Zara mentioned all
three themes:

Failure classes are the ones during which you plan and carry out things that do not work
well for a particular class....I mostly think about failed classes because I feel myself
guilty and think of ways for changing mistakes I have made as this is the only way to
become a better teacher (I7Q1).

Reflection as a means of monitoring performance was not limited to self-reflection,
however. In these examples the participants’ personal reflections on their teaching have been
discussed. But personal reflection is not the only source of information for reflection. Feedback
from others was also considered important, as Eraut states (1994). Several of the participants
mentioned the importance of student feedback, whether informally conveyed nonverbally or
formally expressed through written evaluations. Zara said that ‘students are their teachers’
greatest praisers and critics at the same time’ (I3Q5). Peer and supervisor observations were
also mentioned. Probably the difficulties of the situation in which Nune teaches dampen her
enthusiasm for observations by supervisors; she had the most negative attitude towards them
(although she appreciates it if it is done ‘objectively, [with the] purpose of help’, as she felt was
true of the TEFL Practicum (I2Q4)). Zara is the opposite, writing that ‘the more you are
observed the more perfect your teaching
becomes’ (I2Q6). For these participants, recognizing
that reflection was a source of information through which they could improve their teaching was
a result of their TEFL Practicum course. (This is true for Nune, too, who was inspired by it to
develop a self-evaluation form.) Their comments on reflection suggest how much they have
been influenced by it.

Third, reflection on classes was also tied to planning. Nune in particular focused on this
aspect of reflection.

And being reflective is the case after each class. I analyze what was done, what was
left undone, this could be done in better way, but for example it was incomplete. For
example if it was incomplete I’ll try to just for the next time. So if it is an activity that is a
bit connected to the former one, I try to solve this problem in calm and quiet for making
it understandable to them (Olp13).

One interesting point is Nune’s reference to the ‘calm and quiet’ of out-of-class reflection,
reminiscent of Eraut’s contrasting description of the ‘flash’ of classroom decision-making (1994,
p.109). It is also interesting that Nune considers the continuity of lessons in terms of the
students being aware of it, and the difficulty of re-establishing such continuity when a plan is not
completed. This ties in with Nune’s understanding of learning as a step-by-step process in
which knowledge is constructed on previous knowledge. She specifically mentions the
importance of learning from the students themselves what they need for the next lesson by
considering what has happened in the previous lesson.

But the next [time], maybe you will take into account, take into consideration, the result
of this activity, and then some similar activity should be involved in the next lesson, so
they will be more confident, more sure that they have already got what you wanted to
say (Olp15).

In this way reflecting segues into planning, as mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Finally, the previously cited data offers two examples of how reflecting led to changes in
classroom practices. Zara’s decision to nominate Hovik to speak during free discussions but
not other quiet students is an example of reflecting and testing provisional specifications based
on practical knowledge (Ellis, 1997a). When she calls on Hovik, he sometimes speaks, as he
did when I observed her class. However, when she calls on other students, they become
embarrassed. By restricting nomination to the case where it can ‘do no harm’, Zara displays
what she has learned from testing a hypothesis about nominating students. Lusine’s
description of how she changed her approach to grammar teaching is another example. When
she used planned focus-on-form activities, no matter how ‘communicative’ the activities were,
the students weren’t as involved as when they were focusing on content. When she tried
incorporating incidental focus-on-form, the students became more involved, as the discussion
from the role-play feedback session shows.

These two examples reinforce the fact that reflection, whatever the source of its content
and the extent to which it is done, must be understood in light of practices for it to be useful. Its
content needs to be tested or it is mere wool-gathering. While it is clear that reflection is
important to these teachers, what is perhaps more important is that its results are enacted (whether successfully or not is another story), as is implied by the participants’ references to using it to improve their teaching and illustrated in the two examples. The actions these teachers took, however, would have been impossible if they did not have the autonomy to act according to their own intentions. This also required that they be able to recognize and accept responsibility for their actions. Furthermore, without acting on reflection there is no further feedback to determine whether the reflections were of any use. In summary, Chapter Four describes how the participants believe that the TEFL Certificate Practicum course offered them this opportunity. Chapter Five describes how the participants believe they make use of reflection. Therefore, reflecting and making use of reflection appear to be results of the TEFL Certificate Practicum course.

Summary of Beliefs about Teaching

In this section the participants’ beliefs about planning, teaching, and reflecting have been considered in light of their classroom practices. It therefore offers part of the answer to the third research question on the extent to which personal practical theories are related to practices. The sources of these beliefs and practices have also been considered, thereby offering part of the answer to the second research question on the role of influences on personal practical theories. As with beliefs and practices concerning learners and learning, multiple sources of information inform the participants’ beliefs and practices. Although both their Soviet undergraduate and TEFL Certificate educations informed the teaching beliefs and practices of most of the participants, they did so in different ways. Both sources influenced the participants’ internal view of teaching; for most of the participants, their Soviet undergraduate education was a source of information about grammar teaching in particular, while the TEFL Certificate programme provided information about teaching listening and speaking. This is not surprising in light of what was said in Chapter Four: Espoused Beliefs. There, the participants describe how oral and aural communication skills were more or less ignored in their undergraduate educations. Similarly, grammar was more or less ignored in the TEFL Certificate programme. Thus in a sense the two programmes complemented each other. The participants, to varying extents, took up what was offered; information from the two programmes filled up
different ‘spaces’, so to speak. The participants’ external view of teaching, however, appears to have been much more strongly influenced by the TEFL Certificate programme. This can perhaps be attributed, to some extent, to the fact that planning and reflecting were simply not given as much attention as was content knowledge on the Soviet undergraduate programme. For the participants, this left open a ‘space’ in which new information could take hold. Thus, rather than accepting a unified package of theory and practices, most of the participants combined information from both sources. While to some extent this was determined by what each programme offered, it was not in any way deterministic. Each participant more or less came up with her own ‘design’, that is, her own personal practical theory of teaching. Furthermore, much of each ‘design’ appears to be backed up by principled reflection. It is this that the TEFL Certificate programme in particular offered to the participants: it validated their right to be autonomous teachers by giving them the practical tools by which to exercise that right. However, it was successful in doing this at least in part because the core concept—autonomy—was very much already a part of the participants’ general beliefs about education and society, and quite possibly highlighted or even strengthened by their personal experience of Armenia’s changing fortunes, from a republic of the former Soviet Union to the Republic of Armenia.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has covered three broad areas of the participants’ beliefs and practices: beliefs about the aims of teaching, beliefs about learning, and beliefs about teaching. Together they show that personal practical theories are, to varying extents, reflected in the classroom practices of the participants, thus answering the third research question. They have shown that the constraints of teaching situations play a role in the extent to which espoused beliefs are reflected in actual practices.

This section has also shown the complexity of sources behind a teacher’s beliefs and practices. It therefore has also offered an answer to the second research question on the role of influences that shape personal practical theories, which include personal beliefs and values, formal education from their undergraduate and TEFL Certificate programmes, personal learning and teaching experiences, and the sociocultural situation in which they teach.
Chapter Six will show how personal practical theories are developed out of beliefs from these sources. That is, it will answer the first research question. It will suggest that although the interpretive view of teaching offers the most room for the role of theory in articulating and organizing beliefs and experiences, it has weaknesses just as do the behavioural and cognitive views of teaching. Other sources as well as theory inform the beliefs and practices of teachers. These beliefs and practices are integrated in complex and changeable ways. This integration can occur in three ways (although this is not being proposed as an exhaustive list). First, prior beliefs and experiences can offer ‘hooks’ for the ‘loops’ of theoretical information, so that theoretical information can be more readily put into practice. Second, theoretical information can give new ways of understanding experience, so that theoretical information can be more readily put into practice. Third, in areas where there are fewer prior beliefs or fewer prior experiences (and, perhaps crucially, where these are recognized as deficiencies), there is more likelihood of new theoretical information making an impact on beliefs and practices. Implicit in all three of these points is that they involve comparison, suggesting that comparison is important for the kind of reflecting—noticing and analyzing—that may be necessary for teacher development. Through this integration of beliefs and practices teachers create (and recreate) their personal practical theories. Finally, the role of particular beliefs and practices in different personal practical theories can differ even though they appear to have the same content because of their relationships to other beliefs and practices.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Overview

This chapter will summarize the answers to the research questions. It will do this first from the individual perspective of each participant by providing a summary of each personal practical theory. Each summary will begin by answering the third research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’ by briefly evaluating the personal practical theory. It will continue the answer to the third research question by describing the beliefs of the participant based on both her espoused beliefs and my observations of her practices. Next, the summary will answer the second research question, ‘What are the influences that shape personal practical theory?’ and its subquestions on the roles of theory, personal experiences, beliefs and values, and sociocultural context by discussing the sources of the personal practical theory. Finally, the summary will answer the first research question, ‘How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?’ by explaining how the participant appears to have constructed her personal practical theory.

This chapter will then approach the research questions from a general perspective by drawing out common features from the individual personal practical theories. First, the influences on personal practical theories—that is, the answer to the second research question, ‘What are the influences on personal practical theory?’—will be considered in the section Influences on Personal Practical Theories. As each influence is discussed, the way the participants took up those influences will also be briefly addressed, thus providing partial answers to the first research question. The next section will address this latter point more directly. The way beliefs and practices from different source are integrated into personal practical theories—that is, the answer to the first research question, ‘How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?’—will be discussed in the section Models of Teaching and the Role of Interpretation. Then, the way theories and practices are related to each other—that is, the answer to the third research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’—will be discussed in the section Relationships between Theory, Beliefs, and Practices. This discussion will be extended by considering how the
participants’ beliefs about teaching effectiveness, predicated on their views of the relationship between teaching practices and learning outcomes, affect the implementation of personal practical theories in the classroom. This section will suggest that the ability to articulate clearly and act autonomously impacts teaching effectiveness.

Finally, this chapter and this study will conclude by drawing implications from this study, including implications for further research.

At this point it might be helpful to briefly summarize the discussions of the terms theory, practice, and belief from Chapter Two. I have used theory to refer to both source theory from fields such as education and second language acquisition as well as local theory from within the field of teaching English as a foreign language. For source theory, I follow Stern’s description of what he terms T1 theory as ‘a conceptual framework’ that includes a system of thought and a method of analysis or synthesis (Stern, 1983, p. 23). For local theory, I follow Stern’s description of T2 theory as particular approaches to language teaching with their own assumptions, objectives, and procedures. I have used practice, which I point out is a relatively unanalyzed term throughout the literature, to refer to procedures and activities in the classroom. I have used belief following Pajares (1992) as having cognitive, affective, and evaluative components, the latter two components distinguishing belief from knowledge. Thus beliefs, unlike knowledge, may be unjustified, inconsistent, contradictory, or false. They may also, like knowledge, be justified, consistent, coherent, and true.

**Summaries of Personal Practical Theories**

There are a number of themes in the beliefs and practices of each of the participants of this study. These themes together form a personal practical theory of teaching. My use of the term personal practical theory, built on the foundations discussed in Chapter Two, but realized through my investigation into the beliefs and practices of the participants of this study is that a personal practical theory is the body of beliefs that describes (and explains) teaching practices.

This study has focused on individuals and their beliefs and practices in specific contexts. I will now turn to these individuals for a final time, to consider the individual ways in which they have shown me the answers to my research questions, and to offer the general pattern that has emerged as answers to the research questions.
i) How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?
ii) What are the influences that shape personal practical theories?
   (a) What is the role of theory, both source and local, in personal practical theories?
   (b) What is the role of personal experience, beliefs and values in personal practical theories?
   (c) What is the role of sociocultural context in personal practical theories?
iii) To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?

I will do this in individual summaries of each participant’s personal practical theory by evaluating each participant’s personal practical theory, thus answering the third research question; summarizing the main principles of their personal practical theories as they have emerged in the course of this study under the categories of beliefs about teaching, beliefs about learning, personal beliefs and values, and beliefs about the local context, then explaining the sources of those principles, thus answering the second research question; and finally by describing how the participant appears to have developed her personal practical theory, thus answering the first research question.

**Irina’s Personal Practical Theory**

Irina is the unemployed participant for whom I have no classroom observation data; Irina’s personal practical theory is based only on her espoused beliefs.

Irina believes that the aim of good teaching is the good results of the students. She believes that she needs to create a positive learning environment that encourages risk-taking by developing good communication with students, understanding their individual needs and learning styles (through needs analyses and individual advice), and making sure that students stay interested. However, she worries that with younger learners spontaneous communication can lead to behavioural problems. She believes that classes should be planned simply and clearly and that she should stick to her plan. By sticking to her plan, for example by only accepting relevant student responses, she believes she can minimize behavioural problems.

Several of these beliefs touch on Irina’s beliefs about learning. It is clear that Irina believes that individuals learn in different ways, which is why she believes she needs to meet those needs. She believes that risk-taking is important. She also believes that students learn automatically, without explicitly attending to the language.

Irina’s personal beliefs and values are that education should be encouraged; through it, one becomes open to alternative perspectives and learns to think for oneself. She believes that
education is the key to creating a civilized and democratic society. She believes that it is important to treat people as individuals rather than just as members of a group.

The role of education in creating a civilized and democratic society appears to be related to the context of teaching in a nation which is struggling to build democratic institutions. It is also related to her focus on individuals rather than social groups and that her students need English in order to study and work.

However, it is difficult to see how Irina reconciles the tensions between developing individuals who can think for themselves and take risks and a classroom in which a plan is rigidly followed and student responses are acceptable only if the teacher so judges them.

Irina’s personal practical theory of teaching appears to have been influenced by the TEFL Certificate programme and her experiences as a language learner. Irina appears to have been exposed to more speaking in her undergraduate education than any of the other participants, although, like all of them, she feels that listening was largely ignored. Like some of the participants, she has little to say about her undergraduate pedagogical courses other than that they were very general. And, like many of the participants, she recalls her undergraduate practicum course as a somewhat frustrating experience in which her errors were pointed out but no advice and no positive feedback offered. Against this background she enrolled in the TEFL Certificate programme. She was initially disappointed because she did not understand the overall aim of the programme. However, as she came to understand its aim she also came to appreciate and value the knowledge and skills the programme offered her. Like most of the participants, she accepted the new information on curriculum and course design, individual learner differences, practical skills in teaching listening, and other practical teaching skills from the Practicum course.

In these areas Irina identified deficiencies which the TEFL Certificate programme overcame. She also discovered through the Practicum that her own practices could be useful to her development as a teacher if she became aware of them. Finally, Irina believes that she had learned a great deal merely as an observer of her TEFL Certificate instructors. It is, of course, unfortunate that I am not able to corroborate Irina’s reported beliefs through observations of her practices. But such are the vicissitudes of life in Armenia, where unemployment is well over
50%. Through formal coursework and learning experiences, Irina’s personal practical theory of teaching has developed.

**Varsenik’s Personal Practical Theory**

Like Irina, Varsenik also believes that the aim of good teaching is the good results of the students.

As a teacher, Varsenik believes that she can develop her own professional knowledge by reflecting on her teaching. She does this by considering whether her lessons have had a positive effect on the students, thus connecting her beliefs about the aims of teaching with her actual teaching practices. She believes that she should have clear aims and not just a series of planned activities, although she also believes that she should have a plan and be prepared to execute it. However, she believes she should be flexible in how she actually teaches. Student interest needs to be considered, and she is willing to alter her plans to better engage it. In her planning, Varsenik considers the students’ needs, level, and abilities. This is particularly reflected in the timing of activities.

Varsenik has specific beliefs about how to approach teaching language and how to teach specific skills. She believes that the structure of a language needs to be taught first, and then vocabulary. However, she also believes that it is important to start teaching speaking and especially listening right from the start. In an intermediate reading and vocabulary class, it was clear that Varsenik followed through on her beliefs about the importance of grammar and speaking and listening. Although she found it difficult to get her students to respond spontaneously during speaking activities, she believes genuine communication is important, and she had more success in meeting it in the outer language of the lesson and when opening and closing the class. This also reflects her belief in the importance of flexibility and variety: Varsenik made use of different opportunities to encourage genuine communication.

However, Varsenik also believes that discipline problems can arise in classroom in which the teacher appears to be too friendly and open with students. She therefore believes in taking a strict attitude towards students who are unprepared, late, or absent.

Varsenik believes that learners differ individually and tries to meet those needs through needs analysis, individual advice, and variety in her lessons. This also maintains motivation,
which Varsenik believes is essential to learning. However, she worries that in general her students are extrinsically motivated for grades and believes that she must try to change this attitude.

Varsenik did not elaborate much on her personal beliefs and values, although she does believe that education is important for society. Perhaps this is why she is so concerned over her students’ apparent failure to recognize that education has other purposes than just good grades. She also appears to believe that people must be treated as individuals.

Some of Varsenik’s beliefs are perhaps related to her beliefs about her teaching context. Varsenik identified the students’ focus on grades and readiness to exploit friendly, open classrooms as part of the culture of Premier Institute in particular and a holdover from Soviet Union.

Varsenik’s personal practical theory of teaching appears to have been influenced by her Soviet undergraduate education, the TEFL Certificate programme, her experiences as a language learner, and her experiences in the situation in which she teaches. She attributes her overall approach to teaching, with its focus on structures and vocabulary, to her Soviet undergraduate education. Her comments suggest that this approach and her classroom management style are founded on her own experiences as a language learner. Her beliefs may well be reinforced because her teaching situation is constrained by required textbooks that must be completed and structure-focused annual examinations, making her students partial to activities that they recognize as useful in meeting their own aims. However, the TEFL Certificate programme has clearly influenced her as well. Like all of the participants she found information about curriculum and course design and individual learner differences important. She described how she has developed practices that reflect what she learned about these areas. Some of her observed practices—using a plan, creating a positive learning environment, trying to encourage genuine communication in her lessons—are also attributable to the TEFL Certificate programme. Like all of the participants she identified the skills courses as particularly useful, especially listening. She also described her own efforts to develop her listening skills, and in particular what she calls her ‘listening memory’, throughout her education. In this respect her autonomous efforts as a language learner appear to have sensitized her to the value of information about developing listening and other skills.
Recognizing and making use of such opportunities (as a learner and as a teacher) as well as integrating knowledge and skills from different sources appear to be the means by which Varsenik’s personal practical theory of teaching has developed.

_Hasmik’s Personal Practical Theory_

Like Irina and Varsenik, Hasmik also believes that the aim of good teaching is the good results of students.

Hasmik believes that teachers need a professional body of knowledge, in particular of the language, but also of practical skills. Like Varsenik, Hasmik also believes that through her teaching she can develop her professional knowledge. Again, she believes that by reflecting on the results of the students, she can analyze the lesson in order to improve it. Thus she connects her belief in reflection with her belief in the aims of teaching.

Hasmik believes that the teacher plays the central role in making the teaching-learning process effective. It is her role to set specific targets and help the student reach those targets. This is done through directing the student’s attention and gradually building up language step by step. First drills, then practice, and finally use are the techniques she believes should be employed.

Although Hasmik believes that plans are useful, she believes that she should only plan the gist of a lesson because she also needs to consider student responses. On the one hand, she believes it is important to plan her lessons around the specific problems a student has. On the other hand, she believes that student responses are acceptable only if they are relevant. This is related to her belief, similar to those of Irina and Varsenik, that some students try to take advantage of friendliness and open communication in the classroom, so a teacher needs to be strict about what is acceptable in order to keep the students focused on the task.

Hasmik also believes, very strongly, that understanding grammar is the key to successful language use. She also believes that vocabulary is important. She therefore believes that language teaching should begin with the explicit teaching of grammar and vocabulary. However, she also believes that speaking and listening skills are important to develop.
Hasmik’s beliefs about teaching are closely tied to her beliefs about learning. Individual student needs must be considered. She has strong beliefs about learning in general, however. Hasmik believes that students need to consciously apprehend language in order to eventually get a ‘feel’ for it. This is related to her teaching belief that she needs to direct the students’ attention and ensure they have, and know that they have, specific learning targets. It is also related to her teaching belief that explicit teaching is important.

Some of Hasmik’s personal beliefs are that through education an individual forms herself according to her own inclinations. She believes that education develops analytical and evaluative skills. She also believes that education makes an individual useful to society.

These are connected to her beliefs about the context in which she teaches. She is helping her students develop the English they think they need in order to get jobs and be useful to society. She also considers her teaching practices in light of the context. She believes that methods and practices need to be applicable to the local situation.

Hasmik’s personal practical theory of teaching appears to have been influenced by her Soviet undergraduate education, the TEFL Certificate programme, her experiences as a language learner, and her experiences in her teaching situation. Like Varsenik, Hasmik was also constrained to a certain extent in her teaching situation since examination tutoring, by its very nature, sets its own goal. Furthermore, exam tutoring is an established practice in Armenia with clear expectations from students. Within these limitations, however, some of Hasmik’s practices revealed their theoretical origins, which were supported by her stated beliefs. Hasmik attributes her strong beliefs about the importance of explicit knowledge of language structures as well as her own knowledge of them to her undergraduate education. It is, of course, difficult to determine to what extent her own learning experiences versus information from pedagogical courses influenced her teaching beliefs, especially since Hasmik found little to appreciate in either her undergraduate Practical Pedagogy or TEFL Certificate Methods courses, for example. However, this does not rule out their influence on Hasmik’s beliefs. Because her stated beliefs so closely match the conscious-practical method, it seems that Hasmik’s undergraduate education did play a formative role in her beliefs. It is also true that her personal experiences with language learning and language learners have reinforced this belief. Her Practicum courses have also influenced her. Like Irina, Hasmik found her undergraduate
Practicum to be a largely negative experience, and made particular mention of deviations from the lesson plan being pointed out to her as mistakes. In her TEFL Certificate Practicum, however, she recalls being able to explain her lessons and, perhaps more importantly, the constraints under which she was teaching to a mentor who listened. Similarly, information from the TEFL Certificate programme on language learning strategies has also been reinforced by Hasmik’s own experiences with language learning strategies, and both of them have apparently informed her teaching practices. Finally, information from the skills courses have also appeared to influence the way Hasmik approaches teaching the skills. However, her descriptions and my observations indicate that her own experiences as a learner and teacher have played a role in the way she understands and incorporates knowledge and skills into her own practices.

Hasmik’s sense of herself as an individual appears to be reflected in her clearly and strongly stated beliefs and in her use of personal experiences to understand and integrate information from different sources; in this way her personal practical theory of teaching has developed.

_Nune’s Personal Practical Theory_

Nune has a well-developed personal practical theory of teaching in that she is able to articulate many of her beliefs. Furthermore, many of them are related to each other and reflected in her practices. She believes strongly in the importance of professional knowledge and ongoing professional development.

Nune believes that the aim of good teaching is to share her knowledge so that her students are introduced to English. In this way she can also meet two other aims she has, to help her students become connected with the world and to help her students explore their own values. These are connected with Nune’s personal beliefs and values concerning the role of education and her country’s future.

Nune’s aims are also related to her beliefs about teaching. She believes that the role of the teacher is to guide her students into making progress towards a goal. Therefore, she believes it is important for the teacher to understand what she is doing and why. She also believes that there should be clear connections between activities in a single lesson and between lessons. This is related to her beliefs about planning. Nune believes that lessons
should have clear goals, but that the teacher cannot be wedded to her lesson plan. Rather, she believes the teacher must monitor student interest and progress in case a lesson needs to be altered. This is related to her belief that it is vital for a lesson to be spontaneous, so that there is room for the lesson to flow from the ideas of both students and teacher. All of these beliefs lead Nune to place a great deal of importance on reflecting on her lesson and using those reflections as part of the planning process. They also mean that Nune has very strong beliefs about the importance of teacher autonomy, since it is only the teacher in the classroom who knows what needs doing.

Nune has specific beliefs about teaching language skills. She believes that metaknowledge about language structures can help her students learn, especially by helping them compare English and Armenian (and Russian). She believes this kind of conscious knowledge enables students to take control of the learning process. Nune believes that all the skills are important and should be integrated together. This is related to her belief that there should be connections between activities and between lessons. Nune also claims to believe that communicative language teaching is the best way to teach, although this belief is not always evident in her practices.

Nune’s beliefs about teaching are closely connected to her beliefs about learning. She believes that learning is constructed step by step between the teacher and the student. She believes that this process should be conscious. This is connected to her beliefs that lessons need goals which the students need to be aware of. It is also related to her beliefs that teachers need to be flexible so that they can adjust the lesson to the students’ progress towards the goal. In short, Nune believes that students learn by doing.

Not all students are exactly the same, however. Nune believes that the teacher is responsible for learning about the individual differences of her students and appealing to them through a variety of activities. Thus Nune believes that needs analysis, student feedback, and reflection are important ways to develop her knowledge of her students. Nune believes it is very important to appeal to different sensory modes and different types of intelligence, not only because it helps different learners, but also because it reinforces knowledge. She also believes that younger learners respond best to inductive learning, while older learners also benefit from deductive learning. She believes it is important to be sensitive to students’ individual
personalities and that therefore she should treat students differently in order to be fair to them as individuals.

Nune has strongly held personal values that influence her teaching. She believes that education is vital to the development of individuals and society. She sees teaching as a calling at several levels. She believes she was called to teaching through her own learning experiences. It is her calling to help her students become individuals who can help Armenia. It is also her calling to develop her profession within Armenia. Thus Nune’s personal values are very closely connected to the context in which she teaches.

Nune understands her teaching in light of the context in which she teaches: her neighbourhood, her city, her country. She believes that she must teach in ways that fully involve all students. This sense of mission has led her to believe that she must help her own school, and the school system at large, by introducing new ideas to her colleagues. Nune believes that professional development and activism is part of her duty as a teacher and as an Armenian. She believes that through her activism she will help renew the school system. She believes that through her teaching that she will develop the next generation who will lead Armenia forward, and wants to ensure that they have a sense of national consciousness that will enable them to critically reflect on the alternatives facing Armenia. Nune believes that teachers are heroes.

Nune’s personal practical theory of teaching appears to have been influenced by her Soviet undergraduate education, the TEFL Certificate programme, her investigation of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, her experiences as a language learner and teacher, and her experiences in her teaching situation. Nune taught under perhaps the strongest set of constraints and it would be difficult to imagine them not affecting her beliefs and her practices. However, these constraints appear to have different effects on her beliefs and practices, making her all the more firm in her beliefs. However, her practices sometimes appear to differ from her stated beliefs. Despite some influences from the TEFL Certificate programme, and despite clear evidence of very professional teaching practices, Nune’s classroom is a rather ‘traditional’ one that offers much more language practice than language use. However, Nune’s stated beliefs about language learning processes are not merely consistent with the conscious-practical method, but display a clear and thorough understanding of this method. Many of her
teaching practices are far more consistent with the conscious-practical method than communicative language teaching. What Nune has absorbed from the TEFL Certificate programme and her own investigation into the Theory of Multiple Intelligences is largely information about individual learner differences that assists her in fulfilling her role as an expert who organizes learning—including communication skills—for students. Thus Nune’s personal practical theory of teaching combines information from several theoretical sources as well as her learning and teaching experiences.

It appears that Nune has retained the theoretical information she learned in her undergraduate education and added to it theoretical information from the TEFL Certificate programme and her own research. She has retained some ‘traditional’ classroom practices and added other practices from the TEFL Certificate programme. Nune’s teaching repertoire appears to be highly automatized through her extensive experience (over ten years); possibly because she continually attends to her teaching through her own research and reflection; and possibly through the sheer force of her personality. Furthermore, as alluded to above, Nune’s early and lengthy experience as a student of a beloved but embattled teacher is reflected in her own similar experiences as another beloved but embattled teacher. Here, personal practical theory emerges from a variety of sources melded by personal experience and, rather strongly in this case perhaps, personality as well.

Zara’s Personal Practical Theory

Zara’s personal practical theory of teaching is well-developed and clearly articulated. Her beliefs are integrated with each other and consistent with her teaching practices.

Zara also believes that the aim of good teaching is to share her knowledge. She also believes that it is important for her to have a professional body of knowledge and to continue to develop it.

Zara believes that she needs to teach both knowledge of the English language and the ability to use it. Towards this end, she believes that establishing specific targets, focusing student attention (through extensive use of questions and recasts), and making use of students’ prior knowledge are important. She believes that it is important to have students offer examples of teaching points in order to understand how they ‘feel’ about them. However, she also
believes that students need opportunities to engage in genuine communication without worrying about errors or corrections. Furthermore, she believes that it is important for students understand English structures directly, without possible interference from attempts to translate. Together, these beliefs mean that Zara thinks it is best to separate form-focused instruction from meaning-focused instruction. However, even during form-focused instruction, she believes in offering opportunities for genuine communication. She believes it is important for her students to be maximally engaged in the class.

Planning is important to Zara, but she also believes that she must allow for spontaneity. She therefore believes that she needs to establish general goals for the lesson, but allow room for student responses and questions to guide it towards those general goals. She also believes that she needs to adjust her lessons when students aren’t satisfied. She therefore finds student feedback very important. In-class and out-of-class reflection also are important to her for this reason. They enable her to remember and analyze what has transpired, offering her an opportunity to improve.

Many of these beliefs are related to her beliefs about learners. She believes that conscious knowledge of the structures of the language makes learning easier and ultimately enables students to develop a ‘feel’ for the language. She also believes that it develops the ability to self-correct. Therefore, Zara tries to elicit responses through questions and corrections through recasts.

Zara believes that she needs to understand her students individually and appeal to their differences. She believes that the first few weeks of a class are an opportunity for her to get to know her students and experiment with different techniques to see what works best. She also believes that she must be sensitive to students’ personalities in order not to embarrass them; at the same time, she believes she needs to help students overcome factors that might prevent them from learning. This is connected to her beliefs about classroom participation. She believes that it is her job to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. At the same time, she believes that she should not force students to participate. By offering different types of activities with different participation patterns, she tries to give all of her students the opportunity to participate comfortably.
Some of Zara’s personal values are that education is important to both the individual and to society. She believes it is important to be open to new ideas, but not to reject old ideas simply because they are old. She believes that education is the most important weapon a person has, a belief she says she acquired through the difficult times Armenia has faced since independence. Thus this belief is related to her beliefs about the context in which she teaches.

Zara believes that local sensibilities need to be considered in teaching. She understands that English is important to her students’ futures, not only for jobs, but also for developing a wider perspective. At the same time she is sensitive to cultural differences and the conflicts that can emerge.

Zara’s personal practical theory of teaching appears to have been strongly influenced by her Soviet undergraduate pedagogical education, the TEFL Certificate programme, her experiences as a language learner and teacher, and her experiences in her teaching situation. Like Nune, Zara has clearly stated beliefs about learning processes that are not only consistent with the conscious-practical method, but appear to be based on a solid understanding of its essential points. Zara is as aware of the deficiencies of her undergraduate education as she is of its strengths, however. Her perception of it as circumscribed left her ready to avail herself of new information in the TEFL Certificate programme. Her prior teaching experience also left her ready to understand that information in light of her experience, enabling her to notice and attend to what she perceived to be relevant. Therefore Zara also has combined new information, in particular on individual learner differences, methods, and teaching skills with old information and experience. And like Irina, Zara was also open to learning through observation. Having her ideas and questions respected not only appealed to her as a learner, but also influenced her teaching practices. Her positive feelings about being respected when she asked questions reinforced the idea that the genuine communication associated with communicative language teaching was a worthy practice.

Zara’s teaching situation—despite or perhaps even because of its constraints—reinforces both the conscious-practical method from her Soviet education and the communicative method from her TEFL Certificate education. Zara’s logical division of her practices into form-focused and meaning-focused can be seen not as a compromise, but rather as a considered choice that respects the strengths of both of her educations as well as her
beliefs and her students’ expectations. Thus Zara’s personal practical theory of teaching has emerged from several sources and her efforts to integrate them.

_Lusine’s Personal Practical Theory_

Lusine’s personal practical theory of teaching is well-developed and consistent with her practices.

Like Nune and Zara, Lusine also believes that the aim of good teaching is to share her knowledge with students. She has another aim as well, tied to her values, which is to help her students become independent and critical thinkers. Yet another aim is tied to her perception of Armenia’s difficulties since independence; it is to help her students learn how to live.

Lusine summed up her teaching beliefs herself by saying that she didn’t believe in teaching, only learning. In fact Lusine further articulated her teaching beliefs, but they are consistent with this statement. Lusine believes that the teacher is a learning partner, someone who should guide students’ learning. She believes in the strong form of communicative language teaching and in task-based teaching and learning. Her lessons are focused on content because she believes that students should be exposed to language by using it in a context for a purpose.

These beliefs lead Lusine place a great deal of value on planning and reflecting. She believes in setting general aims for her lessons and choosing activities that can meet those aims and satisfy her beliefs about teaching and learning. Lusine believes that it is essential to know why she is doing everything she does as a teacher; she believes that making principled choices distinguishes her current teaching from her novice teaching. These aims are based on her understanding of her students’ needs. However, Lusine also believes that she can only set a direction for teaching. Teaching and learning occur in the unpredictable interactions during class. Thus Lusine believes that her role is to be responsive to her students. In this way she can identify specific language points when they emerge as problems for the students. She can then draw her students’ attention to them.

Consistent with her beliefs about teaching, Lusine’s beliefs about learning focus on understanding her students and providing opportunities for them to engage in genuine communication. She believes that individual knowledge of her students can help her to teach
them better. Needs analyses, student feedback, open communication, and reflection are important means to understanding her students and their needs. Offering a variety of learning opportunities and being flexible enable her to keep students motivated. Lusine also believes it is important for her to listen to her students, be interested in them, and respect them. She also believes that student-student interaction is as important as teacher-student interaction, and expects her students to respond to each other in the same thoughtful, interested, and respectful way that she does. She also believes that her students have to become responsible for their own learning.

Lusine's beliefs about teaching and learning are consistent with her personal beliefs and values. She believes that education can be looked at in two ways: as a means for self-discovery and as a means to develop practical and professional skills of use to society. Lusine believes that these are merged in her own educational experiences, since it is through her personal beliefs that many of her teaching beliefs have emerged, and it is through her professional development that she has learned about herself. Lusine values autonomy highly. These values are further reflected in her beliefs about the context in which she teaches.

Lusine strongly prefers teaching in contexts in which transparency and autonomy exist. She believes she has been fortunate in finding such positions, but she is also responsible for creating those situations by clearly articulating her expectations and by taking advantage of opportunities. She believes in making changes, but in ways sensitive to the local context. She also believes that individuals must determine their beliefs and make their choices for themselves. In order to do this, however, people need to be independent and thoughtful. For Lusine autonomy and responsibility are two sides of a coin.

Lusine has travelled far from what she was originally exposed to in her Soviet undergraduate education. Lusine's personal practical theory of teaching appears to have been influenced by the TEFL Certificate and MA programmes, her experiences as a language learner and teacher, and her teaching situation. Lusine appears to have been open to new information because of her personal beliefs about education and the role of individuals in society, also true of other participants; in her recognition of deficiencies in her education, but also true, to varying degrees, of all of the participants; in her being powerfully influenced by a teacher, also true of at least one other participant. A key difference, however, between Lusine and the other
participants is her experience of her teaching situations and how she has approached them. Lusine has had few constraints. But more important is how Lusine recognizes the lack of constraints as opportunities for her to exploit, that is, as affordances (van Lier, 2002). Furthermore, this is something Lusine has been doing throughout her teaching experiences since her unsupervised practicum in her hometown during her undergraduate education. Lusine is attentive. She notices affordances and acts on them, doing so with at least the bare intention of finding out what she could do, up to the replete intention of knowing what she will do.

This is not to suggest that Lusine, in appearing to accept so much so completely of what the TEFL Certificate (and MA) programme had to offer, is not critical of it and not cognizant of what she had learned from her Soviet undergraduate programme. Lusine also acknowledged that her understanding of structures was due to her undergraduate education, and it has possibly influenced her teaching of them more than she herself might acknowledge (although there was little evidence of this with her advanced learners who perceived themselves as having little need of traditional grammar instruction). Lusine, therefore, also has a personal practical theory, influenced by a variety of sources, but strongly—perhaps predominantly—based on her own taking up of affordances; her own understandings of theories, learning experiences, and teaching experiences; and most importantly, her own critical response to them all. Lusine has a personal practical theory of teaching that has emerged from her active efforts.

**Influences on Personal Practical Theories**

In these summaries of the personal practical theories of the participants, several themes emerge. One is the role of information from theories and practices encountered in formal education. Another is the role of personal experience both as a learner and teacher of language. Personal beliefs and values about life, language, and education also have a role to play; for Armenians, their own tragic history and its impact on their self-image is a powerful and undeniable influence on such general beliefs, as are recent historical and political events and current uncertainties. Finally, teaching is accomplished in specific sociocultural contexts. The stakeholders in these contexts—government officials, school administrators, parents, students—also have a voice in what goes on in individual teacher’s classrooms. These will
each be dealt with in turn, thereby providing a general answer to the second research question, ‘What are the influences that shape personal practical theories?’ As each influence is discussed, the way the participants took up and integrated information from each source will also be addressed, thus also providing partial answers to the first research question, ‘How do EFL teachers develop personal practical theories?’

*Formal Education*

The participants’ personal practical theories appear to have been strongly influenced by their knowledge of both theoretical and practical information from courses in their formal educations, both their Soviet undergraduate education and their TEFL Certificate programme. This includes knowledge of:

- the English language;
- language learning;
- language pedagogy;
- language teaching practices.

The participants, of course, have different knowledge of these areas and in varying degrees. With Zara, I have treated knowledge of the English language as ‘the same everywhere’ (Olp18), that is, I have not tried to trace the participants’ beliefs much further than their own statements that their Soviet educations provided them with a great deal of this knowledge. I have tried to point out some of the knowledge the participants have in these areas: language learning (such as learning styles), language pedagogy (such as the conscious-practical method), and language teaching practices (such as role plays).

Many of the participants have described explicitly held beliefs that they unhesitatingly attribute to their formal educations. They also have explicitly held beliefs that they do not attribute to their formal educations but which appear to be derived from them. To some extent in both cases there appears to be a relatively straightforward relationship between declarative knowledge from formal coursework and personal practical theories: knowledge from formal coursework has been transmitted to become theoretical beliefs that inform (inspire or justify) practices.
What is not so straightforward is why only some ‘available’ knowledge from formal coursework is incorporated into a personal practical theory. For example, in the TEFL Certificate programme the participants were presented with psycholinguistic models of language acquisition. While it would not be possible to say that none of the participants took up any of the information about them, most of them appear to have taken up very little of it.

There are no doubt many reasons why this might be so. Besides obvious possibilities such as the lack of understanding, interest, and memory, I will focus on two other possibilities. One of those reasons may be that the participants may have already had a satisfactory explanation for language learning that was strongly enough held that it could not be dislodged. This may be the case, for example, with those who appear to have fairly strong beliefs in the learning processes that underlie the conscious-practical method. Alternatively, the participants may have felt (rightly or wrongly) that new information could be subsumed under prior explanations. Another reason may be that the participants did not perceive the relevance of the information. Chapter Two cites several sources in which pre-service and in-service teachers make such comments about SLA in particular; it would not be surprising if psycholinguistic models were perceived to be even less relevant. This casts light, then, on when theoretical information from formal education is more likely to be incorporated into a personal practical theory: when it is perceived as salient or relevant. As the findings have shown, this is what appears to be the case for some of the information the participants gained from formal coursework, such as individual learner differences. However, why some information is perceived as salient or relevant is another question. At least part of the answer to this touches on the roles of personal experience, personal beliefs and values, and teaching situations.

**Personal Experience**

Personal experience appears to have played an important role in the participants’ personal practical theories. Both positive and negative language learning experiences appear to have inclined the participants in certain directions. The negative experience of not having had much speaking and listening in their language learning lessons and thus having had difficulty acquiring those skills inclined the participants to view it as a deficiency that needed to be addressed. Therefore one reason why communicative language teaching in general as well
as both theoretical and practical information about teaching speaking and listening were welcomed as relevant is based on prior negative learning experiences.

The influence of their own language teachers is another area in which personal experience has affected personal practical theories. One participant imitated a favourite teacher, thereby developing an early interest in communicative language teaching. Many described how teachers motivated them, thereby setting the stage for them to consider how to motivate their own students. Here, positive learning experiences made theoretical information on communicative language teaching in the one case and the role of motivation in language learning in the same and other cases appear relevant.

Another more general way in which learning experiences may have influenced the uptake of theoretical information is the general educational background of the participants. Their prior educational experiences had a strong transmission and product focus. Declarative knowledge from perceived ‘experts’ was a familiar, respected, and readily accessible form of knowledge for the participants. As the findings suggest, some of the participants were unhappy with courses that had an overly practical focus—like the Materials Portfolio, or inexpert sources—like student presentations in the Methods course. The fact that much of the theoretical information presented in the TEFL Certificate programme was perceived to be relatively recent and, in some cases, based on empirical research, appealed to the participants as a means of making up for perceived deficiencies in their ‘old’ and ‘ideological’ pedagogical educations. Further support for this comes from the fact that the participants were required to write research papers for some of their TEFL Certificate courses, something most of them appeared to have not done before, and which they therefore describe as formative experiences. (Only one participant, Nune, mentioned having written a research paper as a part of her undergraduate degree, and she says that her supervisor ‘chose’ her to do so.) In other words, the TEFL Certificate programme offered many of the participants their first look at a professional body of technical knowledge and their first steps at developing a professional technical skill. This was not perceived by them as irrelevant or impractical, but as a positive experience that expanded their knowledge base. This is not meant to suggest that there was no such professional body of literature in Soviet pedagogy; on the contrary, it is a rich field, particularly in second language learning and psycholinguistics. However, the participants do not appear to
have been exposed to it in such a way that they perceived it as salient or relevant with the possible exception of classroom language learning, and even there, only one participant directly attributed her beliefs to Soviet pedagogy.

Teaching experience appeared to make both theoretical and practical information appear relevant as well. Three of the participants—Nune, Zara, and Lusine—began their teaching careers while or after completing their undergraduate educations but before enrolling in the TEFL Certificate programme. They therefore entered the programme with teaching experience. All three believe that their teaching experience positively affected their understanding and accepting information in the TEFL Certificate programme, enabling them to recognize the relevance of both theoretical and practical information.

There was another role that personal experience played as well. Many of the participants appear to have acquired knowledge of teaching practices through exposure during the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975). For example, several stated that their many years of grammar learning were sufficient preparation for grammar teaching.

In developing beliefs and practices from personal experience, the participants were in a position to recognize themselves as sources of information for their beliefs and practices. To the extent that the participants do recognize themselves in this role they also recognize themselves as autonomous. Learning to be self-reliant is associated with learning to be self-critical, as Lusine points out, and both of these are at least partially related to learning how to reflect on and evaluate practices through observer feedback during the TEFL Certificate programme Practicum course. But besides learning a technique for self-improvement, this process also validated the participants’ sense of themselves as a legitimate source of information for their beliefs and practices. It may also have legitimated the role played by personal beliefs and values, the subject of the next section.

**Personal Beliefs and Values**

The personal beliefs and values of the participants also appear to have influenced their professional beliefs and practices. It is not surprising, of course, that general views about language and education inform more specific views about language education. The participants grew up in a multilingual environment with strong language policies which impacted their lives
and educations. They lived through historical and political events that have dramatically altered the roles of languages in their country, and as EFL teachers they have been a part of that process.

The participants of course saw education as a source of knowledge, but also of perspective, with its implied critical stance. Most of the participants felt that education was the means by which one discovered one's individuality. Implicit in some of the metaphors used by the participants is a picture of the individual as an autonomous being. This belief in individual autonomy is perhaps partly responsible for the participants' interest in individual learner differences. It may also be why they were ready to accept responsibility for themselves as a source of information—a kind of virtuous circle.

The impact of general educational beliefs may be especially significant with the participants who view language teaching as having non-linguistic aims. Nune and Lusine have strong beliefs about the role teachers can play in creating cognitively aware individuals. These beliefs have had an impact on the way they teach. Nune's use of themes with moral implications and her guidance of discussions to moral outcomes are one example. Lusine's efforts to make her students critically engage with their ideas and her respect for students as autonomous individuals, as shown in the interaction patterns of her class, are another example. Both Nune and Lusine see their efforts as part of the development of individuals who will be able to lead Armenia forward. Thus the wider context in which they teach influences what and how they teach, the next topic.

Sociocultural Contexts

There is no question that the sociocultural context of the participants' teaching situations has influenced their beliefs and practices. All of the participants have limited access to resources considered 'normal' in the West, such as supplemental materials and photocopying privileges. Most of them also teach in physical conditions that would not be tolerated in most Western countries, and in the case of the lack of running water would not even be legal. Constraints such as required textbooks and examinations are strong influences, in part because their existence creates expectations on the parts of stakeholders. Not only are students interested in completing the textbook in order to be prepared for the annual exam, so are their
parents. School administrators are also interested. And in the state educational system (at both secondary and tertiary levels), where evaluative reports based on classroom observations of teachers are read aloud at staff meetings, being perceived as having met such expectations can be the difference between having a job or not.

Institutions are not alike; they impose different constraints to different degrees on teachers. But teachers have a role to play as well; they expect, demand, and exercise autonomy in different ways. Some of the participants are more active than others in seeking ways in which they can implement their own ideas in spite of constraints. Some of the participants are also more aware than others of the resources that are available to them. Several of the participants, to varying degrees and in varying ways, appeared to perceive themselves as agents of change. Pennycook (1999) points out that there are two ways in which this can occur: change of students, in order to give them the opportunity to work in the system; and change of the system, in order to broaden it. It is clear that some of the participants of this study took on both of these challenges. And although some of them worked in supportive environments that encouraged them to share their new ideas, not all of them did. Nune stands out as one who was not in a particularly supportive environment but nonetheless chose to work for change, not only for individual students, but of the system itself. It is of course interesting that it is her efforts to disseminate information more widely that have been met with the most resistance; her classroom is more or less sacrosanct—in part because she expects (and in a sense demands) it, but also in part because she does meet stakeholder obligations no matter—or because of—how ‘creative and a bit different’ (I2Q1) her lessons are from the perceived norm.

In other words, teaching situations are as potentially interactive as classrooms. Much depends on how individuals (and individuals as representatives of institutions) perceive their roles; much more depends on how far they are willing to discuss, rethink, and perhaps alter those roles. In a dramatically changed situation as in that of Armenia, the impetus for change is great, but so is the impetus to retain the familiar. The wider context of Armenia’s position, described in Chapter Four, enmeshes events—even classroom teaching events—in layers of meaning for those who seek them. In embracing new teaching methods and techniques, is one also embracing the West? Is one rejecting the Soviet Union? Is one rejecting Armenia? And
from an even broader perspective, the historical, these questions are merely the most recent
version of that perennial topic of discussion in Armenia: are we Eastern or Western? (To which
there is always someone who responds, why can’t we just be Armenian?)

The influence of teaching situations—how they are understood and how they are
reacted to—will, of course, be affected by each individual’s general beliefs, personal
experiences, and formal education. Thus these influences are related in complex ways. This
section has shown how these influences affected the participants’ personal practical theories; it
has also shown how the participants took information from these different sources. The next
section will focus more directly on how information from different sources is integrated into a
personal practical theory.

Models of Teaching and the Role of Interpretation

This section will focus on answering the first research question, ‘How do EFL teachers
develop personal practical theories?’ by looking at the ways in which different models of
teaching have addressed this subject. It will then offer a critique of the interpretive model of
teaching and illustrate it with examples from this study.

In Chapter Two: Literature Review several models of teaching were described, focusing
on those of Freeman (1996): the behavioural, cognitive, and interpretive models of teaching. In
general each model is understood to imply certain views of how teachers deal with theories. On
the behavioural model, the implication is that teachers passively accept theoretical information
handed down from experts and transmit it to the classroom through approved practices. In the
cognitive model the implication is that teachers commit themselves to a particular theory and
then apply it to the classroom through appropriate practices. In the interpretive model the
implication is that teachers actively shape their own understanding and use of theoretical
information through their own experiences, beliefs, and situations.

Because I have presented data that shows that the participants have understood
theories through their own experiences, beliefs, and situations, it would appear that the personal
practical theories of the teachers I have described in this study best fit the interpretive model of
teaching. While I do not disagree with this outcome, I do think that several caveats are in order.
These caveats concern the way teachers acquire theory and the way teachers interpret theory.
First of all, as I have argued in Chapter Four, the participants appear to have taken up theoretical information on all three models of teaching. Some information appears to have been transmitted, some appears to have been applied, and some appears to have been interpreted. Taking up information in these different ways suggests that a critical faculty is at work by which different ways of taking up information are ‘selected’. This is, perhaps, the weak version of my position. There is a strong version as well.

As I argued in Chapter Two, I disagree with the implications about the way teachers acquire the information they are presented with. I suggest that teachers can be critically engaged with information on the behavioural and cognitive models and actively involved in considering it—interpreting it—in light of the specifics of their teaching situation. I would also suggest that this has always been the case, unless actual sanctions exist (as can be argued was the case with some of the participants of this study during their undergraduate Practicum course). Furthermore, I am not at all sure that it is inappropriate for transmission and prescription—and even sanction—to be a part of developing a professional body of knowledge and expertise. The key words here are ‘developing’ and ‘a part’. Learning how to do something is not quite the same as doing something, even when actually doing that thing is essential to learning how to do it (as is the case with any practice). In the learning of practice, transmission, prescription, and sanction may well be effective or even necessary, even if they are not sufficient for learning practice, and even when they are clearly insufficient for professional practice. This assumes, of course, that there is knowledge worthy of being transmitted and practices worthy of being prescribed, at least to future practitioners who think critically and act autonomously.

I also argue that interpretation can be inadequate: experiences can be limited; interpretations of them can be misunderstood or narrowly understood; and analyses of them can be shallow, prejudiced or illogical. Relying on personal experience and individual interpretation is as mistaken as relying on ‘armchair’ theory and ‘laboratory’ research. Thus the unmentioned but ever present sense of ‘progress’ that one senses in discussions of teaching models—that the interpretive view and its concomitant focus on the role of reflection in teacher development is ‘better’—seems to me to be at very least exaggerated. It is simply a different view, and as a different view is valuable for offering another perspective from which to
understand how teaching is learned and accomplished. Were the field lacking the behavioural model of teaching with transmitting expert information and replicating expert practices, or the cognitive model with understanding and applying theory, however, their development and promulgation would be just as ‘progressive’ as is that of the interpretive model. Knowledge comes from many sources and in many forms, and all of them have their roles to play.

In other words, I believe that the models outlined above do not adequately capture the relationship between theory, beliefs and experiences, and practices. Theories, as declarative knowledge, are presented, presumably by experts, to others, both fellow experts as well as nonexperts. They can be presented in different ways and they can be taken up in different ways. They can be stated, recommended, suggested, offered, or otherwise presented by any of many other cognitive operations. They can be memorized, understood, analyzed, critiqued, or otherwise taken up by any of many other cognitive operations. However, there appear to be two extremes in both the presentation and taking up of theories. On the one hand, theories can be presented as received views of the truth which are to be accepted. On the other hand, theories can also be presented as alternative versions of possible truths which are to be critically engaged. However, whether presented with the intent of acceptance or critical engagement, theories can be taken up in either way. Presented with dogmatic ideology, the learner need not accept it as such; presented with a tentative or alternative possibility to be analyzed and critiqued, a learner may take it as received truth (or even truths, thereby raising the spectre of inconsistency or, perhaps worse by some lights, relativity).

For example, all of the participants describe their Soviet pedagogical education as a received theory presented for acceptance. Their uptake of this theory, however, differs. Lusine, for example, appears to have critically engaged—at least to the extent of rejection—her Soviet pedagogical training; Hasmik, Nune, and Zara all appear to have (at one time) accepted it, more or less, as a received view (not to say that they were completely uncritical of it; they did, after all, take up the opportunity to learn about a different view of teaching). All of them, to varying extents, continue to accept it, although they have also, to varying degrees, come to critically engage with it. The TEFL Certificate programme, despite its strong communicative language teaching slant, presented a variety of theories and associated practices and attempted to get its students to critically engage with them, but with varying degrees of success. Some students
had a strong urge to know what the ‘right’ way or ‘best’ way of teaching was. Lusine’s reference above to how she ‘fully embraced’ communicative language teaching could suggest taking up theory on the behavioural or cognitive model, were it not for other factors that suggest that she takes a more critical approach to theory and a more interpretive approach to practice. At the theoretical level, I remember how difficult it was to convince some students that by presenting Chomsky’s views on language acquisition (in one class) I was not advocating them, and that therefore by critiquing them (in the next class) I had not ‘changed my mind’ or ‘made a mistake’. (Of course, merely by making such suggestions, students were engaging in critical thinking—aimed at their instructor, unfortunately, rather than the content of her lectures.)

Taking up practices, however, is different from taking up theory for two reasons. First, although practices may be presented as a received view of declarative knowledge to be accepted, they cannot be enacted as such because teaching is situated and interpreted (Johnson, 1999). Perhaps it is possible for practices to be rehearsed and evaluated against a received view, but situated, enacted practices immediately spiral out of the abstract and general down to the concrete and particular. Practices are interpreted as they are performed, regardless of how they are presented as declarative knowledge. This can be shown by considering whether any interpretation occurs in practices on the behavioural view of teaching.

Rigidly following lessons as organized in a state-approved and required textbook based on scientific principles would appear to be the height of the behavioural view of teaching. Some of the participants described the expectations of their undergraduate Practicum course in this way, and their Soviet teaching methods textbook advises that the syllabus is a state document which must be followed. Nonetheless, the particular contingencies of a particular classroom at a particular time and place offer, (and perhaps even require) opportunities for interpretation, if only that one teacher smiles as she teaches and another grimaces. One moves about; the other stands still. One nominates by pointing at students who volunteer; the other nominates by pointing at students already seated in alphabetical order. Nonverbal interaction alone offers opportunities for beginning to interpret practices to suit specific teaching situations. Perhaps more importantly, they can be understood in different ways despite being, at some level, the same practice. Nominating alphabetically may be a means of maintaining order and exercising control; it can also be a means of ensuring equal (although not necessarily equable)
participation rights. (This point will also be discussed below from a different perspective.) Different understandings simply are interpretation. If these points are true of the behavioural model, then they are true also of the cognitive and (of course) the interpretive models.

Second, a body of practices or a practice can expose as inadequate a seemingly sound theory or strongly held beliefs based on it. This can occur for several reasons: inadequacy of the theory, inadequacy of the ‘interpretation’ (that is, the beliefs of the teacher), and inadequacy of practice. The first of these, inadequacy of a theory, can only be suggested here, as it would involve thorough consideration of a theory. One brief possible example will be given. The stated failure of the participants to gain listening and speaking skills despite twelve or more years of language study, at least some of it attested to be in the hands of expert teachers, would be an example of ineffective practice if and only if such skills were intended to be taught (and it appears that they were not intended outcomes). However, if the participants were taught by expert teachers adhering to the conscious-practical method, then it would indeed be an inadequacy of the theoretical foundations of that method, as speaking and listening skills are supposed to be outcomes of following that method. This is, of course, a debatable point, just as are the inadequacies of naturalistic learning and the strong form of communicative language teaching in developing accuracy and control over structures. However, the efficacy of particular methods and the theories that support them is not the issue here. The point is that it is in practice and not just ‘in theory’ that theory can unravel. (And this is as true of the laboratory as it is of the classroom, of physics as well as second language education.) This lack of external validity is one of the reasons why, on the cognitive view of teaching, some applied linguists are hesitant to apply, or suggest that others apply, their research findings as well as their theories (Ellis, 1997a). The human factor involved in the detailed and specific cases of teaching and learning in actual classrooms may be the reason why the research results of the ‘soft’ sciences differ from those the ‘hard’ sciences as far as external validity goes. However, theory in applied linguistics still shares with theory in the ‘hard’ sciences the features of breadth and generality that enable a variety of detailed and specific cases to be subsumed under it. A theory’s applicability to a particular instance may be limited but valid within those limits. A theory without any external validity, however, would be pointless.
Inadequacy of interpretation can be shown by considering whether practices can be poorly understood on the interpretive view. The participants' comments appear to describe the TEFL Certificate programme as offering a more or less interpretive view of teaching. Even though there was a strong communicative slant to the programme, the participants were exposed to a variety of teaching methods and practices. The participants' descriptions of their Practicum course offer perhaps the strongest evidence that the interpretive model was, to some extent, the overall teaching view supported by the TEFL Certificate programme. Other courses also offered a variety of views which the students were expected to engage with and not merely accept, as suggested above.

For example, all of the participants claim to have been influenced by information on individual learner differences. At least one participant, by virtue of teaching the same students for up to nine years, has detailed and sustained knowledge of each student in her class, enabling her (as she appears to do) to know how to individually respond to and appeal to each student. Nominating students is one of the ways she employs her understanding of individual learner differences: some are chosen for this activity, others for that; some are chosen quite frequently, others less frequently. For example, one explanation offered of why one student was frequently called on was that he became disengaged if he did not have an active role to play; giving answers—even wrong ones—appeared to motivate him. Another participant, however, says she presents to her students the learning strategies that she has found effective. Here is a difference in the quality of interpretation: one has a broader view based on perceived differences between her students; the other has a more limited view based on generalizing from her own experience, apparently heedless that what works for her may not work for her students. Although both participants have interpreted theory in their efforts to make use of it in practices, one has, as Johnson puts it, 'robust reasoning' (1999, p. 10) with a stronger critical component and a wider range of information sources.

Thus not all the participants have the same quality of interpretation. All knowledge is potentially prone to the same failures and successes in understanding. Declarative knowledge of theories and how it is interpreted is not privileged on the interpretive view any more than it is on the behavioural or cognitive views.
Inadequacy of interpretation is different from inadequacy of practice, that is, novice performance of unproceduralized declarative knowledge. This, too, of course, occurs; and through time and practice it can be redeemed. Unredeemed, however, are expertly performed proceduralized practices that are ineffective despite being based on seemingly sound theory and strongly held beliefs, as occurs when a theory or its interpretation is inadequate.

In short, the answer to the research question: How do teachers develop personal practical theories? is that personal practical theories are dynamic systems of pedagogical beliefs from a variety sources (theory and practice from formal education, personal experience, personal beliefs and values, and sociocultural contexts) which mediate each other. Because the participants themselves had conflicting views on the roles of theory and practice in their descriptions of the influences on their pedagogical beliefs, and because it is the issue that initially motivated my interest in this study, I focus on this relationship in particular. In particular, theory from formal education may be presented in different ways, ranging from the certain truth to a possible version of a truth; it may be taken up as beliefs in different ways, ranging from noncritical acceptance to critical engagement; these beliefs may inform (inspire or justify) practices; these practices are based on interpreting those beliefs; and practices themselves are interpreted at each enactment in a particular time and place. This body of beliefs used to interpret practices is a personal practical theory of teaching. A personal practical theory of teaching is dynamic, not only because beliefs may change because of information from theory, but also because the enactment of practices which are themselves subject to interpretations in particular situations may also offer the raw material for reinforcing, altering, and testing beliefs. It is mediated, because beliefs from any one of these sources may influence the interpretation of beliefs from any of the other sources as well as the enactment of practices.

Therefore a number of influences on the uptake and interpretation of theory are involved in the development or emergence of a teacher’s personal practical theory and on the way personal practical theory is related to classroom practices. How these influences are related to each other in a teacher’s personal practical theory is the topic of the next section. It will specifically address the relationships between theory, beliefs (meaning both general and pedagogical beliefs), and experience (meaning both learning and teaching experiences and the situations in which they occur).
Relationships between Theory, Beliefs, and Practices

This section takes a more general perspective on the answer to the third research question, ‘To what extent are personal practical theories reflected in classroom practices?’ by considering the ways in which theory have influenced the practices of the participants. It will suggest that theory has two different functions: it offers direction for action and it offers explanation for experience. As a form of direction, theory can offer hypotheses to test, as Ellis suggests (1997a, b); it can also guide the choices a teacher makes. As a form of explanation, theory can offer a means of articulating beliefs, as Ellis suggests (1997a, b); it can also offer a framework for recognizing and understanding experience.

In Chapter Two: Literature Review several sources were cited for different conceptions of the idea that teachers have multiple sources for their knowledge of teaching. Most of these different conceptions shared a common theme: teachers have multiple sources for knowledge and (therefore?) multiple kinds of knowledge. Thus Ellis (1997a, 1997b) writes of the different Discourses of technical knowledge (which he describes as explicit and declarative) and practical knowledge (which he describes as implicit and intuitive); Crandall (2000) refers to the differences between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge; Eraut (1994) discusses the differences between propositional knowledge and skilled behaviour; others make similar distinctions. Common to all these different conceptions is the idea that there is, as Ellis puts it, a gap between the two types of knowledge. This is then offered as one of the reasons why theory does not, cannot, or should not be directly transferred to the classroom, and following from this is, presumably, its purported and reported uselessness as the reason why teachers reject theory. (Other reasons include theoretical findings lacking corroboration and external validity.) I have presented the idea that another gap also exists: within practical knowledge, between a teacher’s personal practical theory and situated practices. I have suggested that interpretation of personal practical theory in the practices enacted in a specific situation bridges this gap.

Some appear to hold the view that because theory cannot be transmitted directly to the classroom that therefore teaching is largely a matter of tacit knowledge or automatized routines. On these views there appears to be little if any room for the role of theory, whether source or
local (and possibly even personal practical theory), in practices. Others, however, look for ways to describe how theory and practice may influence each other. Thus Ellis (1997a, b), among others, mentions the role of theory in articulating existing principles and constructing new and testable principles during reflection on practices. He suggests this, however, from the perspective of the applied linguist. Nor does it address the potential gap between theory and practice within practical knowledge.

The data on which this study is based is from the perspective of the practitioner, that is, the teacher. Nonetheless, the two ways in which Ellis describes theory as potentially informing practices appear to have been used by the participants of this study. They also appear to have used theory in other ways. For example, they appear to have beliefs based on theoretical rather than personal knowledge about learning which play a role in their teaching practices during planning, decision-making, and reflecting. These beliefs appear neither to articulate nor to test, but rather to guide what to do—in other words, some of the participants appear to use theory on the cognitive or possibly even behavioural model of teaching. In this way theory offers direction to the participants. They also appear to have used theory to perceive and understand their experiences differently. In this way theory offers explanation to the participants.

The participants themselves addressed the relationship between theory and practice. They recognize a larger role for it than what much of the recent literature seems to suggest is typical of some pre-service and in-service teachers, while at the same time raising many of the more common points about its perceived lack of relevance. Zara, for example, stated, ‘At first glance, it seems there is no connection at all’ (17Q4) between theory and practice. But she went on address the issue in several ways, as did the other participants.

Among the issues commonly raised is that theory can’t be considered while in the classroom. Both Zara and Hasmik raised this point. Zara approached it from the external perspective; reading about theory is something done outside the classroom: ‘When teaching, there is not much time to read theoretical books and implement some new ideas in your classroom. You think you have had enough of theory and now it is time to teach’ (17Q4). Zara points out the classic dilemma of teachers with too much to do and not enough time to do it; but she also points out the disjunction between theory and practice. Theory is something you read
and have; teaching is something you do. Hasmik focuses precisely on this point, writing, ‘I rarely think about theory while teaching’ (I7Q4). She adds that ‘sometimes the teacher may not pay attention to their relations and be involved in practical stuff only’ (I7Q4). This suggests—just barely—that such lack of attention (perhaps in proceduralized teaching) is not always an ideal state, just as van Lier (1996) suggests.

Another commonly raised theme is the difficulty of applying theory to practice. Zara, for example, listed a few principles she had been taught, and then said of them, ‘All these sound great in theory. One may find things different in practical teaching’ (I3Q4). Hasmik wrote, ‘I can’t draw exact parallels between the theory and practice, though I can’t deny the fact that there is a direct relationship between them’ (I7Q4).

Hasmik’s reference to her difficulty in explaining the relationship but her conviction that there was a relationship was repeated by virtually all of the participants. One aspect that was raised was the strength of the relationship between theory and practice. As mentioned above, Hasmik thought there was a ‘direct’ relationship. Zara described theory as ‘indispensable’ to teaching (I3Q4). Varsenik wrote that ‘practice and theory are always together’. Irina wrote that ‘both knowing theory and having experience are very important’ (I7Q4). Similarly, Nune wrote, ‘The theory and the practice are very important’ (I7Q4).

Despite the professed difficulty of explaining the relationship, the participants offered more articulated expressions of it. Hasmik wrote, ‘I try to combine the principles of the approach with its practical applications’ (I7Q4). Varsenik wrote that first she studied theory, and ‘Now I am using them in practice, this is in some way the combination of the two components’ (I7Q4). Zara wrote ‘In fact, all of my teaching practice comes from the abundance of theory input I have had during my studies’ (I7Q4).

Lusine took a different approach to the question and tried to show exactly how her practice ‘comes from’ theory.

I think I’ll talk about a specific example here. For instance, one of the underlying theories [i.e., theoretical principles] of the communicative approach is that there should be an information gap in order for authentic learning to happen. I think I fully embraced this theory from the very beginning and while teaching I try to choose activities that provide an opportunity for information gap, that’s why my favourite types of activities are problem-solving, jigsaw, case studies, when students work in groups and each has a specific piece of info he/she has to share in order to complete the task (7Q4).
Several of the participants focused on teachers making connections between theory and practice. Hasmik explained that theory can become practical if it is discussed with other teachers: ‘if we discuss something, we try to find links, connections with our teaching experience’ (OlP7). Irina wrote that ‘when you have experience I think you are able to fit the theory to your special needs’ (I7Q4). An important difference between these views is that Hasmik speaks of finding (possibly already existing) connections, whereas Irina speaks of fitting the theory to practices. Nune expressed this active role for the teacher in the greatest detail.

The theory may have quite another usage as every class has concrete edges of reflection and the same theory can be represented in different ways depending on many criteria: the territory which the students represent, their background knowledge, families, intellectual maturity and et cetera. Thus the theory can be shaped and coloured according to the teacher’s perception and creativity (I7Q4).

The classroom as ‘the concrete edge of reflection’ is a metaphor that captures the situatedness of teaching, thus contrasting it with the abstraction of theory, and then connecting the two through a teacher’s cognitions. Nune’s list of specific, concrete factors that tie abstract generalities to particular people in a time and place underlines the importance of a situation in the interpretation of theory. Her continuation of the metaphor by describing a teacher as ‘shaping’ and ‘colouring’ theory again underlines the abstractness of theory and the need for someone to do something with it in order that it be used in practice. This doing, as has been mentioned, requires a degree of autonomy. It is interesting that Nune describes the way that something is done to theory with words referring to cognitions: ‘represented’, ‘perception’, and ‘creativity’. This reinforces the effect of practices on theory; I would limit this, however, to the effects of practices on theory as understood by the teacher, that is, her beliefs. Thus not only does theory (as understood by a teacher as a set of beliefs) give shape to practices, but practices give shape to theory (as understood by a teacher as a set of beliefs). In other words, there is an interactive relationship between theory and practice which is mediated by the teacher’s interpretation—that is, her personal practical theory. Again there is the image of organic unity, with parts that change and shift in relation to each other.

The participants, therefore, see theory as playing an important role in their practices. Some of them also see that theory must in some way be interpreted for it to have a viable role in the classroom. They recognize that it is the teacher who interprets theory through enacting practices.
The data here suggests a broader role for the influence of theory on practices than that for which some of the recent literature has argued in three ways. First, the participants appear to have found theory interesting because they recognized it as salient to their past experiences and relevant to their future experiences. Second, theory enabled the participants to develop ways of understanding their experiences so that they could interpret classroom events and understand the context of their teaching. I thus see theory as offering ways to interpret or mediate beliefs and especially experiences, including ones other than those immediately related to one's own classroom practices. In particular, one's own learning experiences can be understood in new ways. By understanding experiences differently, teachers can then enact practices and respond to classroom situations differently. This can occur on both the external and internal views of teaching. That is, with a different way of interpreting experiences, teachers can plan differently; they can make different on-line decisions; they can reflect on different topics. In this way theory has an explanatory role for the participants. Third, theory guided and even directed the practices of the participants, especially where they had little or no prior knowledge. These three ways in which theory was used by the participants will be illustrated by referring to one example, information on individual learner differences.

First, theory was recognized as salient and relevant because prior beliefs and experiences can act as 'hooks' for the 'loops' of theoretical knowledge. The participants all had varying successes and differing attitudes in their experiences as language learners. For example, Lusine recalled being unmotivated as a language learner for many years. Those who had taught also recognized that their own students had varying successes and differing attitudes. Nune, for example, was aware that there was an entire population of underperforming students at her school who were more or less dismissed as hopeless. These experiences acted as 'hooks' when the 'loops' of individual learner differences were discussed. They enabled information to be recognized as salient because it was something the participants already knew, but from a personal perspective. Furthermore, the information was relevant to their teaching futures. As teachers they could use the information in order to improve perceived deficient practices under which they (or others) had suffered. One might say personal experience creates interest in the theory and motivates engagement with the theory.
Second, theory enabled the participants to understand their beliefs and experiences more fully and even differently. Although the participants had experiences that they knew in the sense of having them, remembering them, and being able to think and talk about them (i.e., they had beliefs about them), they didn’t know them qua instances of individual learner differences. Their attention was not directed to those experiences in a certain way. That is, the participants’ experiences of there being different kinds of learners were not analyzable as experiences of individual learner differences (learning styles, personality factors, motivation) prior to the information about individual learner differences. They had no system—not merely the lack of vocabulary of unarticulated experience (Freeman, 1996, 2002)—with which to identify, distinguish, organize, and analyze their experiences. (As discussed in Chapter Three: Methodology, it is a theoretical position whether theory ‘determines’ experience through constructs such as specialized vocabulary or not. In that chapter I argue for the position that experience exists independently of and prior to theory, although once it is ‘theorized’ it exists in the theorized aspect. That position is what I have just argued for here: the participants had experiences and beliefs that existed independently of and prior to ‘theorizing’; however, ‘theorizing’ ‘gave’ them ‘new’ experiences and beliefs—but based on the same sensory and, at some ‘lower level’, same cognitive experience.) In this sense theory acts as a heuristic for practice. It allows the teacher to make ‘practical sense’ of her practices by giving her a tool with which to make ‘theoretical sense’. It offers her something to attend to; it makes salient certain features in the classroom which, in turn, make theoretical knowledge recognizable as relevant because of its explanatory power. Furthermore, without that theoretical knowledge, there is little reason to generalize from what might be an individual’s own idiosyncratic experience. Here one might say that theory organizes and explains experience, as well as articulating it.

Third, where there are few or no prior beliefs and experiences, theory can fill in gaps; because of this it may have a greater impact than where theoretical knowledge already exists. Unlike classroom language learning, where the participants did have considerable experience, many beliefs, and even theoretical knowledge, the participants had only a few personal beliefs and experiences and no theoretical knowledge on individual learner differences. There was no ‘competition’, nothing to distort or dislodge or displace. In that sense it was ‘easy’ to take up
information on individual learner differences because there was, so to speak, space for it. Here, theory, as a source for beliefs, can guide or direct practices.

All of these ways in which theory can interface with beliefs and experiences involve comparison. In all these cases beliefs and experiences are compared with theoretical knowledge. Through comparison the teacher mediates theoretical information and beliefs. Through comparison some kinds of new beliefs are formed which are part of a personal practical theory. Through comparison one recognises that one once lacked something by virtue of now having it. Through comparison actual practices are reflected upon as having met or not met objectives. Through comparison feedback juxtaposes the view of the actor and the view of the observer. Without comparison mere noticing does no work. It is not until one begins to relate them to each other as having similar or different properties that one is able to evaluate (in its barest sense) an idea or practice as being a possible alternative worth trying or (in its fuller sense) of one being a better alternative worth trying. Without comparison, there may be no hypotheses to test; there certainly will be no way of evaluating the outcome. Through comparison theory, beliefs, and experiences interact.

From the interaction between beliefs, experiences, and theory a personal practical theory of teaching emerges. A personal practical theory is an articulated abstraction of a teacher’s beliefs about her practices. By going from doing things in the classroom to thinking about what, how, to whom, when, where, and why she does those things, that is, to determining what practices and beliefs she has, a teacher moves to a position where it is possible for her own personal practical theory to emerge. In that process, source and local theories may help to articulate practices, beliefs, and experiences; they may be shown to have guided practices; they may even be a source for practices, either by discovering the origins of old practices or by offering for testing new practices based on hypotheses. In all these cases, however, the teacher herself is interpreting; her belief system mediates the taking up of other beliefs. Furthermore, her own personal experiences and individual beliefs are also a source of information for personal practical theories. At the same time, there is a danger inherent in practice interpreted solely through limited personal experience and uninformed individual beliefs. A personal practical theory is only as good as its beliefs. Beliefs that have been informed by theory and research will be so much the richer for their wider perspective.
There is a fourth point to be made here as well, and that is that particular beliefs and practices can hold different roles in different personal practical theories as well as different roles in the ‘same’ personal practical theory at different times, as Breen, et al (2001) has also described. In other words, a personal practical theory is variable and dynamic. The role of particular practices and beliefs can differ even though they appear to have the same content because of their relationships to other beliefs and practices. In Chapter Five: Specific Findings, the difference between Hasmik’s and Lusine’s understandings of lesson objectives is given as an example. Practices can ‘carry’ theoretical influences through the beliefs the teacher has about her practices. For example, a teacher may use metalanguage with her students. Her beliefs about this practice reveal the influences on her teaching, such as theoretical influences. Thus if a teacher believes that metalanguage is an effective way to direct students’ attention to a language target so that they become conscious of it, this may reveal the influence of the conscious-practical method. However, if she believes that metalanguage is an effective way to learn grammar rules which can then be used to facilitate translation, this may reveal the influence of the grammar-translation method. The teacher’s beliefs about her practices to some extent determine what her practices are in the sense of what they are intended to accomplish. These beliefs may have theoretical origins; if they do, then theory has informed practice.

However, without the teacher’s own interpretation of her practices, not only is it difficult to determine what has influenced them, it is not possible to understand them, because the same practices can be used with different intentions and for different outcomes. If a teacher does not know why she uses metalanguage in the classroom, one needs to wonder why in fact she is using it. What is its purpose? How does it lead to learning? Why do this and not that? It is here where the gap between the theory and practice of practical knowledge can occur. It is also at this level that the gap can be bridged. Because language is a highly effective way in which to express intentionality, the articulation of beliefs takes on an added dimension. Without articulation, it is possible to practice without understanding why one is practicing, that is, without principles such as Richards’ maxims (1996a) or Kumaravadivelu’s strategies (1994, 2001). Without understanding why one is practicing there is the possibility that teaching loses its link with learning. This, then, is one way of understanding the danger of atheoretical teaching that van Lier mentions (1996). Teaching can be atheoretical because it is not grounded in source or
local theory; but it can be just as atheoretical because it is not grounded in a personal practical theory, that is, teaching practices have not been analyzed, abstracted, and articulated by the teacher.

In this way a personal practical theory has organic unity understood in a certain way: while every personal practical theory may have certain parts, those parts may be filled out in similar ways but inter-related in different ways, or filled out in different ways but inter-related in similar ways (Lord, 1964). There is unity, but it is not the unity of necessary content or necessary arrangement of parts, but rather the contingent unity imposed by the holder of the theory whose experiences and cognitions alter over time. Personal practical theory both emerges (out of multiple and complexly related sources) and is formed (by active reflection and articulation). Thus even personal practical theory underdetermines practices. Because of this, there is always room for a gap between theory and practice, whether between the theory of technical knowledge and practice of practical knowledge or within practical knowledge. As has been suggested, a teacher, in trying to articulate her beliefs about her practices, may discover that she cannot because she does not know why she has certain practices. But this also means that there is room for growth, for new links to be made, for new understandings to emerge. In this way gaps are bridged, although new gaps will eventually reveal themselves as long as one continues reflecting on practices. Thus it is the teacher who creates the unity of her personal practical theory.

A teacher, therefore, must believe herself to have the autonomy and the ability to create her personal practical theory. Because source and local theory are recognized, 'legitimized' ways of informing, organizing, and understanding the beliefs and experiences that can become articulated as a personal practical theory, they may also offer a possible means of recognition as a capable and responsible professional.

Thus there is at least one other way in which source and local theory has a role to play in practice: in professionalism. Theory can offer opportunity for teachers to acquire discourse; it can be a first step to entering the Discourse community of technical knowledge. Reading the transcripts, I was struck by how articulate the participants were in discussing individual learner differences. With technical terminology at very least discourse is made available to teachers, but with it comes the possibility of Discourse. The ongoing professional practices of some of
the participants suggest they recognize that having acquired some professional knowledge, they are now also responsible for disseminating it to others as well as practicing it in their classrooms. In other words, they are entering into (and to some extent creating in Armenia) a new Discourse community. Nune in particular appears to have taken on this role; Lusine has also, in both her teaching and her educational aid positions. Zara (who alludes to the two directions education offers: teaching and research) has applied for a PhD programme in the West, and thus is also attempting to enter a new Discourse community. Hasmik has recently graduated from a local (but Western) Master’s programme; Varsenik, who is active in her Institute’s community, has also applied for a scholarship to enable her to study in the West for her Master’s. It is difficult to envision any of these steps having occurred without the participants having acquired some beliefs about current theory in second language teaching. Theory opens discourse doors and in so doing it also opens Discourse Doors. Applied linguists, educationists, and others who make much of the distinction between technical and practical knowledge do no favours to those who, wanting or already having practical knowledge, need to see or can already see what technical knowledge has to offer. Failing to offer theoretical knowledge hampers those who learn in certain ways and those who seek knowledge of certain ways. Failing to encourage the understanding of theoretical knowledge can cut off possible future avenues. The lack of theoretical knowledge closes both doors and Doors. Its value may only become apparent at a later date; the fact it can indeed be found valuable makes theoretical knowledge worthy of inclusion in teacher development programmes.

Furthermore, by implementing both discourse and Discourse within a different setting from that of their origins, the participants appropriate them. They become transformed, not merely transferred, simply because in the process of transfer from one situation to another situation transformation occurs. As the participants find their own voices, their voices influence what they say (Canagarajah, 1999). This is because there is no perspective without Discourse, as Pennycook puts it (1989) or as Searle (1995) puts it, no position without a point of view.

To find ones voice is to be able to articulate ones beliefs. This study, therefore, theorizes that the more articulate a teacher is, the more effective a teacher is because she is able to act knowledgably. However, why a teacher with a personal practical theory uses a practice has been somewhat covertly presented as why she believes it is an effective practice.
Therefore, the ability to articulate a personal practical theory requires beliefs about the nature of effective teaching. The participants themselves addressed this topic, and the discussion will consist of their views on this topic.

**Articulating Beliefs, Teaching Effectiveness, Constraints, and Autonomy**

This section will briefly present the participants’ beliefs about good teaching. It will show that all of the participants, although in varying ways, understood and judged the process of language teaching in terms of its product, language learning. It will then show that personal practical theories can be compromised by teaching under constraints in which stakeholders determine the measures of learning outcomes differently than a teacher might. Finally, it will show that the more articulate teachers appeared to understand learning outcomes in more complex ways that ultimately implicated teacher and student autonomy as outcomes of the teaching-learning process. These teachers also appeared to be somewhat more effective in reaching these outcomes—although, again, constraints were a factor in their success.

As has already been noted in the summaries of their personal practical theories, several of the participants defined the aim of good teaching in terms of the good results of students, although without specifying precisely what they meant by good results. Varsenik simply wrote, ‘Good teaching has good results’ (I3Q4) and only elaborated on it with 'It is necessary to see the result' (OIp8). Irina, for example, defined it in terms of ‘The more the progress, the better the teaching’ (I3Q4). Hasmik thought that in effective teaching, ‘the leading role is the teachers’. She knows better how to make the teaching-learning process effective, thus helping learners to achieve their target language goals’ (I2Q6), and ‘operationalized’ this in terms of the question, ‘Was class useful for you?’ (OIp9-10). Nune, Zara, and Lusine had more articulate answers which will addressed in detail later; here, however, it is important to state that they, too, mentioned language learning outcomes. Nune specifically mentioned that her students outperformed other students in her school of whom ‘nearly 60% are too weak’ (I1Q3), implying that results were one way she judged her teaching. Zara described good teaching as ‘when your students are satisfied with the job you do’ (I3Q4). Finally, Lusine stated that ‘good teaching is the occurrence of meaningful learning’ (I3Q4).
This brings to the forefront an issue which has indirectly informed this discussion: the relationship between teaching practices and learning outcomes. It is, of course, the subject for a different study. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that all six of the participants of this study indicated that at least one criterion by which they judged the effectiveness of their own teaching was learning outcomes. Learning outcomes, however, meant different things to different participants: to some, learning outcomes were measured by examination results; for others, learning outcomes were measured by the ability to communicate. Furthermore, these understandings were closely tied to the relative autonomy of each participant in her teaching situation. Some of the participants taught in situations in which the measures of learning outcomes were dependent on stakeholders; others taught in situations where they could determine the measures of learning outcomes or negotiate with the stakeholders.

These two factors go a long way towards explaining some of the practices of the teachers. Hasmik’s examination tutoring saw its results in the scores of her students; Hasmik focused almost exclusively on teaching the language and skills needed for examinations, just as her students expected her to, although to a large extent their expectations corresponded to Hasmik’s beliefs. Varsenik also ensured that she covered the required course book material that her students would be tested on, and she also did it in ways her students felt were effective, such as teaching vocabulary through translation, although she claimed to personally disagree with the practice. Nune, who claimed belief in communicative language teaching and made some use of its practices, also made use of traditional practices that she perhaps saw as resulting in her students consistently outperforming other students from her school on examinations. Regardless of what Nune might personally consider positive learning outcomes, as will be discussed below, the stakeholders to whom she was responsible measured those outcomes in terms of examination scores. In these four cases, strong stakeholder expectations to meet certain measures of learning outcomes constrained the practices of the participants.

Two participants had somewhat different situations, however. Zara, whose only stakeholder obligations were to complete the textbook (but without examinations) and satisfy her students, was able to not only meet those obligations, but also her own understanding of successful language learning outcomes. Lusine, having tasted the freedom of constraint-free teaching in her first assignment, managed her career in order to work only in institutions in
which she had the autonomy to teach towards her vision of successful language learning outcomes. In both these cases, and unlike the other four cases, students appeared to share their teachers’ understanding of successful language learning outcomes as being the ability to meaningfully communicate in genuine situations. In these two cases, stakeholder expectations acted as a resource rather than a constraint because they were shared expectations.

Thus tying teaching effectiveness to learning outcomes can cut cruelly because it depends on both perceptions and measures of those outcomes. The participants of this study perceived themselves as highly successful language learners according the measures employed in their school and undergraduate educations. They are all proud of their learning achievements under those measures. However, they are all also highly critical of the fact they were left unprepared to successfully communicate in ordinary conversation with native speakers. This simultaneously positive and negative experience has, for some of the participants, resulted in ambiguous and even inconsistent personal practical theories. For others it has impelled them to develop consistent personal practical theories that directly address—in differing ways—the dilemma they have lived as students of language. To develop such personal practical theories, however, appears to have required a degree of autonomy and articulation that not all teachers can hope to share.

This is perhaps the point to allow the three more articulate participants—Nune, Zara, and Lusine—to express what else they believe constitutes good teaching. Briefly something needs to be said about what constitutes being articulate, however. One criterion is the thoroughness and clarity with which the participants were able to describe their beliefs. Here the participants’ words, as quoted throughout this study, speak for themselves. The word counts of the e-mail interviews, where the participants were free to write as much or as little as they wished, are also revealing. Table 3 on p. 79 shows the differences between the participants, with Nune, Zara, and Lusine all writing substantially more than Irina, Varsenik, and Hasmik. The oral interview word counts, in Table 4 on p. 83, show a similar pattern. While these are crude measures, they do offer some indication of the participants’ ability and willingness to articulate their beliefs.

Nune began her beliefs about good teaching with the idea that ‘the best lessons are the ones where students’ speaking time is maximized’ (I3Q4), despite limited evidence of this in her
classroom practices. She continued by discussing what a teacher can do to create a learning situation, focusing on the importance of balancing teacher and student talk-time; giving instructions which the students understand; having clear objectives which are known to the students; ensuring variety in lessons; altering the syllabus in light of individual learner differences; motivating the students; developing learner autonomy, decision-making, and self-expression; and finally, learning from the students. In these latter areas, Nune moves beyond linguistic outcomes for teaching, and her concluding point—that she learns from her students—is particularly interesting. Although Nune did not appear to be completely successful in maximizing student speaking time (it would have been interesting to compare her to other teachers in her school on this point, however), she did appear effective in the other areas she lists. Furthermore, as has been stated previously, she appears to have managed to balance the competing demands of her own personal practical theory and stakeholder expectations in a way that is aimed at transformation of the system.

Zara began less confidently:

You can’t possibly imagine how much I have thought over this question. The reason is that, I am not sure there is one good answer for it. Good teaching is when your students are satisfied with the job you do. But the problem is that they don’t always seem to be satisfied by one simple reason that sometimes they are not even sure what they want…I could have said, for instance, that good teaching includes good planning, sticking to your plan in class, answering the students’ questions accurately, using class time efficiently, explaining new material in a clear and simple way, etc…Of course, all the above mentioned factors are an indispensable part of good teaching. In my understanding good teaching includes all of those, plus it should leave some room for unexpected explanations, unplanned activities and short deviations from the original plan (I3Q4).

Her answer, interestingly, begins with student satisfaction, but ultimately focuses on how the teacher creates learning conditions through her practices in the classroom. Elsewhere, however, Zara went in a different direction:

Well, I think that for me the most important thing is, how to say this, is to make people see your point, to feel yourself as a teacher, and to feel the things that you are doing…I mean the students should see who you are, not like in terms of things that you teach them. Like teacher in a broader sense (O1p25).

This suggests that Zara also sees teaching as more than just meeting linguistic goals. She also appears, like Nune learning from her students, to implicate herself in the results of her activities in the classroom. Her students are supposed to see her as more than a source of language.

Lusine also began with a demurring remark:
Hm, the most difficult question! Essentially good teaching is the occurrence of meaningful learning. If as a teacher you have been able to motivate your students through meaningful learning activities to learn things, plus provided them with learning strategies, so that they will grow as self-reliant learners, if you’ve taught them how to ask questions, i.e., think about various perspectives about one and the same thing, then you’ve done good teaching (I3Q4).

Lusine begins by saying what Hasmik, Irina, and Varsenik said, but with the perhaps key difference of specifying that learning must be ‘meaningful’. Like Nune and Zara, Lusine also goes on to explain it in terms of what a teacher can do to create conditions for learning, and like Nune, she also mentions student self-development as an outcome. Elsewhere, Lusine also brings up the idea that she, too, learns as she teaches. Having described her realization that she could teach her students how to think for themselves, Lusine continued,

And I started loving those exchanges of ideas, those frequent moments of hesitation and search. I found out that teaching provides me with an invaluable milieu I could find nowhere else: I could learn while working. I never ceased feeling myself a learner and teaching provided me with the most meaningful context for learning. You know how there’s always at least this one student who asks the most perfect question and you set out on a quest anew and most importantly not alone…(I1Q4).

Lusine seems to summarize several aspects mentioned by the different participants. Good teaching is being able to do the kinds of things that lead to ‘meaningful’ learning; ‘meaningful’ learning involves not only learning language, but also learning how to learn, and learning how to think. In short, good teaching is effective teaching, but effective teaching leads to more than just learning language—or perhaps learning language is more than just learning a linguistic product, but a process as well. Part of the process is learning how to learn; part of it is learning how to think; and part of it is learning how to be. This kind of learning occurs not only for the student, but for the teacher as well. This kind of learning enables the appropriation of language in order to develop a voice, as Canagarajah (1999) puts it, and construct an identity, as Pavlenko (2003) puts it.

This brings me, then, to the implications of this study.

**Implications**

There are five implications for English language teaching that I have drawn from this study. These implications are:
• theory should be an integral part of every teacher development programme;
• teachers who want to learn are more likely to profit from development programmes;
• teachers should become aware of what they know and don’t know;
• teachers may need to be autonomous in order to successfully adopt new practices;
• a professional community can help support teachers.

These implications are specific to the situation of the participants; however, a few of the implications are more general, and I have made references to studies cited in the literature review where this is so. Therefore, although I do not extend these implications beyond the scope of this study, I do see where others might do so. Furthermore, because of Armenia’s position as a successor state of the former Soviet Union, the scope of this study is not as narrow as it might first appear. The participants were all graduates of a particular TEFL Certificate programme, but they share their undergraduate pedagogical educations with hundreds of others in Armenia. And because of the nature of the Soviet educational system, there are many teachers in other Soviet successor states who had similar educations and teach in similar situations. Therefore I will begin this section by referring to several proposals recently made by an Armenian philologist and an American educationist concerning the future of education in the former Soviet Union. Their proposals indicate that the participants of this study are not alone in their views about educational systems in former Soviet republics.

In Armenia three proposals have been put forth, based on surveys conducted about student learning preferences and recognition of the Western appropriation of Vygotsky and sociocultural theory (Antonian and Davis, 2002). Antonian and Davis write,

We would focus first on re-conceptualizing instruction as the coordination of scaffold activity rather than the transmission of knowledge. Second, we call for a movement led by university faculty to ensure that instructors are both expert in their subject areas and thoughtful in their approach to teaching. Third, we suggest policy and administrative reforms that we believe are required to facilitate these improvements (Antonian and Davis, 2002, p. 2).

Although all three of these are worthy proposals, I would like to very briefly examine the first of these as most directly related to this study. The first of these proposals is theory-based, recommending that certain beliefs about teaching be rethought in light of a theory. It implies that an associated set of practices be used in classrooms. In their article, the authors go on to develop a brief context-sensitive account of their recommendations indicating that they are not
advocating adherence to a theory, but interpretation of it by teachers (as is implied by their second proposal). The first proposal is based on the assumption that Vygotsky needs re-claiming. While I do not disagree with the spirit of this assumption, it is important to note that Vygotsky, his contemporaries, and their students have not exactly disappeared from the post-Soviet scene. A look through past issues of *Russian and Eastern European Psychology* (formerly known as *Soviet Psychology*), which offers English language translations of articles published in professional journals in Russia and other successor states of the former Soviet Union as well as former Soviet bloc countries, reveals that entire issues have been devoted to Vygotsky and Galperin (as was also true prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union). As has been discussed elsewhere in this study, their source theories, in particular Galperin’s, have even informed local theories and been used as the basis for classroom practices, as Soviet pedagogy books show. What appears not to have happened is the extensive and capable use of those practices in classrooms. In other words, the problem appears not to be a lack of source theory or even local theory, but a lack of practice informed by these theories.

Thus it appears to me, based on the comments of the participants, that the Soviet undergraduate programmes in which they were taught perhaps ‘failed’ not so much in the content of what was presented but in making the links between theory and practice, and in particular by failing to regularly offer support for and critical reflection on teaching practice. This was possibly exacerbated by the fact that, according to the participants (and described by Antonian and Davis (2002) as true of tertiary education in general in Armenia), much of what appears to have been going on in many Soviet Armenian language classrooms was not the conscious-practical method as described in Soviet pedagogy textbooks. Thus the lack of reflective support for novice teachers who were, in essence, taught to ‘follow the textbook’ was combined with the powerful background of tacit knowledge developed through years of observation of the grammar-translation method as language students. Under those conditions it is hardly surprising that traditional teaching methods continue to dominate education. To delve into the ‘why’ and ‘whence’ of this kind of Discourse conflict (Kramsch, 2003) is a matter for an educational historian who has insider knowledge of Soviet language institutes and classrooms. But the ‘whither’ is a matter for today’s language teachers and educationists in the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Thus the second and third proposals offered by Antonian and
Davis (2002) are very apt as they address the structural deficiencies that appear to have a hand in what some students apparently consider to be poor practices. They are also commendable for their focus on teachers as the source of change. However, they do not get to the heart of the matter, although it is implicit in their proposals: the importance of effective pedagogical development programmes.

What, then, constitutes effective pedagogical development programmes? I believe this study offers some insights into possible answers to this question; these implications and possible directions for future research will be addressed here.

The first implication is that theory should be an integral part of every teacher development program. The key word is 'integral'. Teachers should learn to understand theory and how to appropriate it, that is, make it useful for their own teaching. Most of the participants appeared to think of their undergraduate pedagogical courses as useless and boring; there are many possible reasons why this might be so, including the suggestion by Antonian and Davis that there is a mis-match between Armenian student learning preferences and typical Armenian tertiary teaching practices (2002). The fact that the same participants who dismissed theory on one programme but embraced it on another is further evidence that the fault does not lie with theory in and of itself. In saying that teachers should learn to understand theory and how to make use of it I am not absolving teacher educators; on the contrary. It is the responsibility of both parties to make the components of pedagogical education, including theory, appear as potentially salient and relevant. Nor should theory be denigrated merely because its role in informing practices appears to be so difficult to describe and explain. While I do not claim to have offered much in the way of either describing or explaining its role, I do believe that I have offered evidence that theory does have a strong role to play in practices. The question, then, is how to ensure that teachers know how to make use of theory in their practices, since apparently that is not always the case. This is, of course, an area for further research. In short, as Lenin said, what is to be done? The other four implications attempt to answer this question.

One problem with teacher uptake of theory is that teachers perceive it to be irrelevant to teaching; they therefore can’t be bothered with it. The same may be true with learning new local theories and using associated practices; alternatively, they may be perceived as inappropriate or challenging in local teaching situations. The second implication, therefore,
obvious though it may be, is that teachers who want to learn are more likely to profit from
teacher development programmes than others. Two factors appear to be involved based on the
evidence of this study. One factor is that the participants chose to involve themselves in the
TEFL Certificate programme. It should be noted that during their undergraduate programmes,
several of the participants were considering careers in translation, not teaching; their lack of
interest in pedagogical courses would not be surprising in that light. However, when they
entered the TEFL Certificate programme, some of them were already teachers; others were
considering that direction. And although they chose to do so for various reasons, none of them
were compelled to do so, as appears to be the case in some studies where pre-service and in-
service teachers appear to have little uptake of new local theories or difficulty maintaining
associated practices. For example, the TEFL Certificate programme was not a pre-service
course required for English teaching, as appears to be the case in one study about Hong Kong
teachers (Pennington and Richards, 1997), and the participants were not retraining to teach
English because they were no longer able to teach some other subject for which they had
originally trained, as appears to be the case in one study about the former Soviet Union (Kontra,
1997).

Another factor is that the participants appear to have been favourably disposed to
alternative approaches to English language teaching because of their own English language
learning experiences, both positive and negative. They had both praise as well as criticism for
their English language learning experiences prior to the TEFL Certificate programme.
Furthermore, their original interest in learning English had already been steeled by a climate in
which studying English was not especially encouraged. The participants were fairly unanimous
in claiming that it was ‘love’ for English that compelled or maintained their study of it prior to the
TEFL Certificate programme. This ‘love’ was personal. There appears to have been little
official encouragement of it, and possibly some discouragement (depending on how one feels
about potentially being asked ‘to decode and translate intercepted messages’ during war with
‘the imperialist Britain and United States’), as Pavlenko describes (2003, p.1).)

These two factors suggest that one of the reasons the participants may have had
successful TEFL Certificate learning experiences was because they wanted to be doing what
they were doing. Trivial though this may seem, such a simple and obvious fact can account for
the lack of success many teachers have in maintaining new practices in their teaching repertoires when compelled to train or retrain. The participants, as described in Chapter Five, believe that intrinsic motivation is far more powerful than extrinsic motivation and, more strongly (although perhaps wrongly as well), that it is a necessary condition for learning. They themselves appear to illustrate its power in shaping their own successful learning. It is not possible, of course, to ensure that all participants in teacher development programmes are intrinsically motivated; nor that the intrinsically motivated always succeed; nor that the intrinsically motivated alone succeed. But it does imply that calls from ‘above’ that aim to prescribe particular theories and practices may meet with greater dissatisfaction than might genuine interest from ‘below’. Thus curiosity needs to be generated, with motivation to learn hopefully following. Teachers try to stimulate interest in the subject for their students; teacher educators should also do this for their students. It also suggests, perhaps controversially, that research into the personal qualities and experiences that may contribute to effective teaching and effective teacher development is a possible (but difficult and dangerous) area for research.

The third implication is that teachers should become aware of what they know and don’t know. This means articulating what they believe and do. Far more has been written on the importance of doing this than has actually been done, suggesting that this continues to be an area for research. In the course of this study, most of the participants commented on how much they were learning about their teaching and how useful it was. While there may have been a certain amount of politeness to such remarks, the specificity of some of their comments suggests that there was a great deal of sincerity, too. Some of the participants pointed out that their role in this study reminded them of the kinds of activities that they had done during their TEFL Practicum course. Many of them asked me for my comments on their teaching, just as if it were a Practicum observation. Observation, reflection, and feedback, then, as the participants themselves have observed, are useful tools. The participants learned how to do this in the course of their Practicum course. It is nothing new, but simply needs underlining: a Practicum course that encourages student teachers to reflect, that offers guidance, support, and constructive criticism is essential to teacher development. Practice alone is not enough. Making links between practices and theories, as can be done through observation, reflection, and feedback, is also necessary. Observation externalizes what was an internal, lived
experience for the teacher, offering another perspective on experience through the opportunity to analyze and articulate intentions, objectives, and outcomes. It also offers alternatives for comparison through the observer’s feedback so that a teaching experience becomes a learning experience for a teacher. With practice, the process that an observer externalizes can be internalized by the teacher so that self-reflection and self-direction—the fourth point—become possible.

Furthermore, observation can also offer an opportunity to make explicit the way theories and practices can be considered in light of specific teaching situations, which is crucial for sensitivity to local conditions. This is especially true where new practices (and new theories) are being introduced. It is difficult to institute change in even the most supportive of circumstances. Doing so in less than supportive circumstances is a challenge that requires noticing and acting on opportunities where it is possible to make changes. But to do this is to exercise autonomy.

Thus the fourth implication is that teachers may need to be autonomous in order to successfully adopt new practices. This, too, is an area in which further research is possible. The TEFL Certificate programme appears to have encouraged the participants to develop a sense of themselves as autonomous teachers. It encouraged them to develop their own beliefs and practices by expecting critical appraisal within formal coursework, reflection on beliefs and especially practices, and individual responsibility for planning and executing teaching plans—none of which, according to most of the participants, appear to have been regularly expected of them during their undergraduate programmes. By developing their own beliefs and practices through critical examination, the participants learned how to choose effective practices for particular situations by continuing to exercise their critical faculties. Externalized processes became internalized, so that the participants became self-directed. Some studies (Pennington, 1996; Liou, 2001), including one in the former Soviet Union (Kontra, 1997), suggest that some teachers have difficulty adopting this type of approach. The teachers either abandon their new practices because they don’t easily fit local conditions (Lamb, 1996) or they adopt them wholesale without sensitivity to local conditions (Shamim, 1996). The lack of ongoing support is seen in some of these studies as a critical factor. However, a strong sense of personal autonomy may be just as necessary to discovering what is both effective and appropriate as it is
to persevering in practicing espoused beliefs. It is impossible to insist on such a quality as a prerequisite for teacher development programmes, but it may be possible to encourage and develop it. This also implies that teachers need to be aware of social constraints on exercising autonomy as well as their own responsibility, as a human being and a teacher, to exercise their autonomy within those constraints and seek to change constraints that hamper effective teaching and learning. It is, of course, a delicate matter as to where constraints should be respected and where they should be changed, and that is why insider knowledge is so necessary.

Nune provides an example of how constraints on effective teaching and learning can be addressed. Nune’s balancing act between stakeholder expectations and her own beliefs appeared to resolve itself in a set of practices that were generally regarded as successful by Nune, the stakeholders, and outside observers. It is perhaps critical that Nune is an experienced teacher with a solid performance record (despite her difficulties with the school administration), and this may point to the direction to be taken in other constrained situations. The example of Nune also shows how careful, methodical, but persistent pressure can lead at least to curiosity about new ideas and practices if not their adoption by colleagues. Despite her initial failure, Nune’s role as an insider as well as an expert enabled her to gauge just how much of what sort of pressure would eventually be effective in eliciting her colleague’s curiosity about the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and its applications in their classrooms. Tsui’s account of how an expert teacher (in a position of authority) was able to encourage new practices in her school also considered the role her reputation as an expert and an insider played in recruiting support (2003). Insiders work the system better than outsiders; and respected, successful insiders better than unrespected, unsuccessful insiders. But outsiders can offer critical knowledge and critical support (in both senses of the word critical) that insiders may need. The TEFL Certificate programme appears to have played such an outsider role for at least some of the insiders it taught: the participants of this study. (It should be noted that local Armenians are playing a greater role in the programme so that it is not as much of an outsider as it once was.) Further research in other settings of the roles of outsiders and insiders in instituting change could help to develop a broad sense of what are and are not effective practices.
With the fourth implication the discussion has shifted from the classroom in a pedagogical programme to actual everyday classrooms where the potentially supportive mechanisms of classmates and mentors no longer exist. As mentioned in the discussion of the third implication (and in the study itself), in general the participants found classroom observations and reflection in the company of others useful. But some of them also indicated that there were not as many opportunities for that as they would like in their everyday teaching. The need and desire to continue learning was also mentioned by many of the participants—along with the comment that such opportunities were not easy to come by in Armenia (especially access to current professional literature), although they have certainly improved in the past few years.

Thus the fifth implication is that developing and maintaining a professional community can help support teachers by allowing experiences to be shared and knowledge to be disseminated. The process and effect of a professional community in creating personal support is another potential area for research. It is very promising that the participants themselves are engaged in helping to create and maintain such a community within Armenia. Certainly professional communities existed within the Soviet Union; in independent Armenia, Western aid helped establish and fund some of the new professional organizations. Varsenik’s presentations help to continue a system already in place at Premier Institute; Nune’s seminars and Lusine’s outreach projects are examples of more recent joint Western and Armenian projects. Furthermore, workshops and conferences are becoming more frequent and better attended; their scope is also growing as professional ties are developed with neighbouring countries, in particular Georgia. For example, one of the participants of this study presented at an English language teaching conference held in Georgia in 2003; this year the conference is being held in Yerevan. Locally generated research, such as a baseline study of English language education in Yerevan (funded by a Western organization), is growing. The first proposal of Antonian and Davis (2002) with which this section began—re-claiming Vygotsky—offers a direction for a pedagogical research agenda that could potentially bear fruit in the successor states of the former Soviet Union just as it has done in the West. Armenian educational theorists mentioned by Zara might provide an even more locally appropriate direction for research. Although many of these professional community-building activities are supported by Western institutions and
funding, they may offer a necessary starting point for more autonomous efforts in the future. (The evidence that external funding does not necessarily compromise autonomy is discussed in Chapter Four.) Perhaps what is most important is that there is an energy and hope for the future that had been all but missing for a number of years. The participants of this study and their colleagues, both Western and non-Western trained, are building an Armenian professional community as their nation builds itself.

Such local professional activities are indicative of a growing sense that Armenia must find her own path forward because she cannot afford—quite literally—to reject either her historical and geopolitical ties to Russia or her newer ties to the West. This is as true in education as in any other sphere. Finding a way to practically include both ‘sides’ without having to reject one in order to accept the other is at times a difficult balancing act. The participants appear to recognize the importance of this, and it is much to their credit that they have forged links between their own pasts and their students’ futures in the present of their classrooms.

As has emerged in the course of this study, it is also to the credit of the TEFL Certificate programme that the participants apparently never felt that they were required to reject what they already knew and did in order to accept what was on offer. And in fact it appears that they did not reject or accept information uncritically, although there are, of course, individual differences. Information from the TEFL Certificate programme was only one source among many drawn upon in creating their personal practical theories. In particular, all of the participants appeared to be sensitive to the specific local context in which they taught and appeared to judge their teaching in terms of what might work in that context. This has led to a range of practices among the participants, from the strong form of communicative language teaching practices to traditional teaching practices combined with the weak form of communicative language teaching practices. It should be emphasized, however, that this approach that recognizes the importance of individual solutions to individual problems is one that the participants attribute to their Western TEFL education through the presentation of theory and through their personal experiences as learners within the programme.

The participants, then, can be said to be weaving their personal practical theories much as an Armenian carpet is woven. Established patterns are repeated, but with individual
variations in designs and colours. Similarly, personal practical theories individually address the same broad issues of learning and teaching using threads of different colours—pedagogical and professional beliefs based on formal educations, personal experiences, personal beliefs and values, and local teaching situations. Thus each participant is creating a unique carpet despite similarities in designs. These carpets are as yet unfinished; they will be completed only when their weavers cease their work.
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDIX A:

E-MAIL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview One

1. Could you describe your educational background? You may want to discuss: In what city and country were you educated? In what language were you educated? What is your tertiary educational background? (years, degrees, institutions)

2. Could you describe your previous EFL teaching experience? You may want to discuss: How many years of experience? What kinds of institutions? What types of classes? What kinds of students? (ages, levels)

3. Could you describe your current teaching situation? You may want to discuss: How many years of experience? What institutions? What types of classes? What kinds of students? (ages, levels)

4. Could you describe the circumstances that led you to choose teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) as a career? What did you do to prepare yourself for it? (courses, study programmes, workshops) Why did you choose these particular ways of preparing for a career in TEFL?

5. Do you think that TEFL has changed in Armenia since you began studying English? If so, how? Why?

Interview Two

Part of this research involves teaching observation. In order for both of us to have a clear understanding of each other’s expectations, this interview will discuss your experience of being observed teaching. Please ask whatever questions you may have about my experiences, both being observed and being an observer. Some of the questions are very specific, especially questions 2-4. If you have observation records please feel free to consult them. If you don’t remember events clearly enough to write about them in detail, answer the more general questions. I know it’s been awhile.

1. Could you describe the teaching and learning situation(s) in which you were observed? You may want to discuss: How was the observation organized? (e.g., Was it formal? Formal—as a part of a course or programme? Who was the observer—a peer? A teacher? A supervisor?) What was its purpose? What did you expect to learn? How were the organization and purpose of the observation connected with your expectations?

2. Could you describe one of your observed lessons? You may want to discuss: How did you prepare for class the day you were observed? What were your teaching objectives for the lesson? What methods did you use? What activities did you do in class? How did the students respond?

3. Could you describe your opinion about the lesson? You may want to discuss: What did you think about the lesson overall? What did you think about the different parts of the lesson? Were there things you would have done differently if you could do it over?

4. Could you describe the exchange of opinion between you and your observer? You may want to discuss: What did the observer think about your lesson? Did the observer notice the same
things you focused on when you planned the lesson? If so, what are some of them? If not, what are some of them? Did you have different views of the lesson? If so, why?

5. Could you compare your observed and unobserved lessons in general? You may want to discuss: Can you compare your preparations? Can you compare the way the lessons work? Can you compare your feelings?

6. Could you discuss the effect of observation on your teaching in general? You may want to discuss: Did the observations meet your expectations? Was their purpose fulfilled? Why or why not? Do you think you have been able to apply what you learned from the observations? If so, how? If not, why not? Do you think your attitude towards teaching has changed because of the observations? If so, how? Why? Do you think the way you teach has changed because of the observations? If so, how? Why?

Interview Three

Hasmik

1. Please explain a little more about the differences between studying at [Premier Institute] and [Western Institute].

2. What do you mean by ‘applied my knowledge gained at [Western Institute] and step by step improved my teaching style’? In other words, can you explain what you actually did in this process of improving? How did you go about it? Perhaps an example would help you express your ideas.

3. Could you say a little more about the differences between being observed by supervisors and by peers? What does being in a supervisory position add to the observation for you?

4. What do you mean by the ‘leading role’ in the classroom is more the teachers?

5. There are some small points I’m curious about. I was surprised you said you could let students practice more in a state school than a private one. Maybe you could tell me a little more on this.

Irina

1. What do you mean by a ‘perfect lesson’?

2. You wrote that you studied general pedagogy at your first university. How does it compare to what you learned about at [Western University]?

3. How do teachers make progress? (For example, you wrote about learning to control your emotions.) What is the role of experience in this?

4. What is good teaching?

Lusine

1. What do you mean by Soviet (or Russian) pedagogy?

2. How does it compare to what you learned at AUA?

3. What do you mean by making progress as a teacher?

4. What is good teaching?
5. How did the practicum change your ideas about teaching? Your classroom practices?

6. What can you tell me about establishing rapport with your students?

Nune

1. What is the main role of observation?

2. What is the role of the teacher?

3. What do you mean by making progress as a teacher?

4. What is good teaching?

5. You mention that teaching is considered a woman’s profession in Armenia today. Could you explain this a little more?

Varsenik

1. What do you mean by Soviet (or Russian) pedagogy?

2. How does it compare to what you learned at AUA?

3. What do you mean by making progress as a teacher?

4. What is good teaching?

5. How did the practicum change your ideas about teaching? Your classroom practices?

Zara

1. What do you mean by Soviet (or Russian) pedagogy?

2. How does it compare to what you learned at AUA?

3. What do you mean by making progress as a teacher?

4. What is good teaching?

5. You mention teachers want to reach ‘perfection’, and that there’s always room for improvement. How do teachers recognize what needs improving? How do they figure out what to do?

Interview Four

1. What were your impressions about the programme that led to your TEFL degree? You may want to discuss: Which courses did you prefer? What were their objectives? What did you do in them? Why did you prefer them? Which courses did you least prefer? What were their objectives? What did you do in them? Why didn’t you prefer them?

2. Could you divide the courses that you took into practical ones and theoretical ones? (You don’t have to list ALL of them—just the ones that first come to mind.)

3. Could you compare your objectives and the programme’s objectives? You may want to discuss: What were they programme’s objectives? What were your objectives? Were they related? If so, how? Did the programme meet your objectives?
Interview Five

1. Could you describe the role of education? You may want to discuss: What is the purpose of education for the individual? What is the purpose of education for society? How did you come by these views? (e.g., your own reflections, your experiences, teachers, colleagues, parents…) have your views on education changed? If so, how and why?

2. Could you describe the role of EFL? You may want to discuss: Why do individuals study EFL? Is EFL important in Armenia? Why or why not? Has the importance of EFL changed? Will it change? How is the role of EFL for individuals and Armenia related to your decision to study to teach it?

3. Could you compare [Western] and Armenian views on education? You may want to discuss: In general, what do you think Armenians believe about the role of education? In general, what do you think [Westerners] believe about the role of education? If there are differences between these two views, would you explain them? What do you think your students believe about education? What do you think your colleagues believe about education? Are your views the same or different as those of your students and colleagues? Explain how and why.

4. Could you compare student and teacher views on EFL? You may want to discuss: In general, what do you think they believe about studying English? Are these views the same or different as your own? Explain how and why.

Interview Six

1. Could you describe yourself as a teacher? You may want to discuss: why did you decide to teach English? What are your qualities as a teacher? Are your reasons for teaching English related to your qualities as a teacher?

2. Could you describe your own EFL learning experiences? You may want to discuss: How long have you studied English? When? Where? How did you feel about studying English? Did that feeling change? Did you have a favourite teacher during your EFL studies? Would you describe that teacher’s qualities? Did that teacher influence you? If so, how? Did you influence that teacher? If so, how?

3. Could you describe your EFL learners? You may want to discuss: In general, how do your students feel about learning English? Have you ever had a favourite student? Would you describe that student’s qualities? Did you influence that student? If so, how? Did that student influence you? If so, how?

4. Could you describe your beliefs about individual factors in language learning? You may want to discuss: Do you think that different people learn in different ways (learning styles)? What do you believe about learning styles? Do you think that personality plays a role in language learning? What do you believe is the role of personality in language learning? Do you think that motivation plays a role in language learning? What do you believe about the role of motivation in language learning?

5. Could you discuss yourself as a teacher in terms of individual factors in language learning? You may want to discuss: Are your own qualities as a teacher related to your learning style, you personality, or your motivations? If so, how?

Interview Seven

1. Could you discuss your teaching practices in general? You may want to discuss: How do
you plan for the classes you teach? Right before you teach a class, what do you do? What are
you thinking about? How do you feel? While you are teaching class, what do you do? What
are you thinking about? How do you feel? For example, do you stick to your lesson plan? Do
you let the lesson flow with your spontaneous ideas? Do you let the lesson flow with your
students’ spontaneous ideas? How do you respond when something unexpected happens in
class? After you have taught a class, what do you do? What are you thinking about? How do
you feel?

2. Could you briefly describe what you first notice about classes you are teaching (e.g., on the
first day)? What would an ideal class be like? How does reality compare?

3. Which TEFL courses have had the greatest influence on your teaching? How? Why?

4. In your teaching, how are theory and practice combined?
APPENDIX B:
DATA REFERENCE AND TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

DATA REFERENCE CONVENTIONS

I have referred to the original data in the following ways.

(InQn) is e-mail interview number and question number.

(Olpn) is oral interview and transcript page number.

(XOnpn) is the first letter of participant's pseudonym, classroom observation number, and transcript page number.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

I have transcribed broadly, using the following conventions based on Richards (2003).

[ Overlap
(xx) Inaudible
(word) Unsure transcription
(())) Other details
- Interruption
T Teacher
S Student
SS More than one student
R Researcher

Where individual speakers are identified, it is noted in the text. Where Armenian or Russian is used, it is noted in single parentheses. Excerpts of the data will be numbered by turns of a stretch of speech by a speaker rather than lines, as Hatch does (1992).
APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CONSENT FORMS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Exploring the Role of Language Teacher Experiences and Beliefs in the Integration of Theory and Practice

To: Participants

My name is Anne Feryok. I am a staff member and student at The University of Auckland enrolled for a PhD Degree in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics. I am conducting this research for my thesis. It will explore how the experiences and beliefs of language teachers affect the way they integrate theory and practice after their Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) development program. I have chosen this field because of the growing interest in TEFL in non-English speaking places such as Armenia.

You are invited to participate in my research. Your participation is voluntary, and you may decline without giving a reason. If you do participate, you may withdraw any information traceable to yourself up to 30 May 2003. Be assured that any information you provide will be kept confidential as far as is practical for internet communication, and your name will not be used. Anyone who has graduated from the TEFL program and is teaching English is eligible to participate. Although it will take time to participate, it will also provide you with an opportunity to develop both personally and professionally. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

My research is based on e-mail and in-person interviews. The first source of information would be eight one-hour e-mail interviews during early 2003 about your experiences of studying and teaching English as a Foreign Language.

The second, optional, source of information would be a diary that you keep for six months on topics inspired by the interviews. Each entry would take up to one hour a month. The diary could be kept at the same time as the interviews or continue into mid-2003 if you prefer.

The third source of information would be an on-site visit I would make, probably in September-November 2003. At that time we could informally discuss your experiences and beliefs for up to one hour. If you agreed, this informal discussion would be audio taped. If you were teaching during that period, I would observe you one to three times, audio taping or taking notes on the relevant classroom practices. The observations could be informally discussed for up to one hour. If you agreed, these informal discussions would be audio taped.

My other sources of information are single interviews with the Head of Departments of the tertiary institutions at which you did your English language teacher training. The purpose of these interviews is not to discuss you, but to provide me with background information about English language teacher training programs that exist in Hong Kong.
If you wish to participate in my research, please let me know by filling in a consent form and giving it to me. Then please e-mail at one of my e-mail addresses below to initiate our contact.

I would like to add that you will be reimbursed for any reasonable transportation, stationary, photocopying, or internet charges that you incur as a result of this research.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If have any questions or would like more information, please e-mail me at:

a.feryok@auckland.ac.nz
or: a_feryok@yahoo.com

or contact me at: Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand.
(Telephone: 64-9-373-7599 ext. 7689)

My supervisor is: Dr. Gary Barkhuizen
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand.
(Telephone: 64-9-373-7599 ext. 8197)

The Head of Department is: Professor Rod Ellis
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand
(Telephone: 64-9-373-7599 ext. 4876)

For any questions regarding ethical concerns please contact:
The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Subjects Committee,
The University of Auckland, Research Office—Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand. Telephone: 373-7999 ext. 7830

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 19.06.02 for a period of 3 years, from 19.06.02
Reference 2002/035
CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Exploring the Role of Teacher Experiences and Beliefs in the Integration of Theory and Practice

Researcher: Anne Feryok

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information traceable to me at any time up to 30 May 2003 without giving a reason.

• I agree to take part in this research.
• I agree/do not agree that interviews, classroom observations, and discussions will be audio/video taped.

Signed:

Name:
(please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 19.06.02 for a period of 3 years, from 19.06.02 Reference 2002/035
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Exploring the Role of Language Teacher Experiences and Beliefs in the Integration of Theory and Practice

To: Principals and Directors

My name is Anne Feryok. I am a staff member and student at The University of Auckland (New Zealand) enrolled for a PhD Degree in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics. I am conducting this research for my thesis. It will explore how the experiences and beliefs of language teachers affect the way they integrate pedagogical theory and classroom practices after their Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program. I have chosen this field because of the growing interest in TEFL in non-English speaking countries such as Armenia.

One of the participants in this research teaches at your school or institute. I would like to observe her teaching; she has given her consent. The purpose of the observation is to see how the participant makes use of classroom practices, and how she relates these practices to pedagogical theories. It is a descriptive, non-evaluative observation, and will only involve my taking notes on the relevant classroom practices so that the participant and I can discuss them. It focuses on the participant’s experiences and beliefs, and not directly on the students or the institution, although these will of course be a part of the participant’s experiences and beliefs and of my observations, and may be referred to by both of us during our discussion.

If you wish to allow me to observe this participant teaching at your institution, please let me know by filling in a consent form and giving it to the participant (who will give it to me) or sending it to me at the address in Armenia listed below.

Please be assured that all information will be kept confidential and that names will not be used.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at:

a.fer yok@auckland.ac.nz or
a_feryok@yahoo.com

I can also be contacted at:

(Contact details for Armenia to be included when available.)

My own PhD department’s contact information is:
My supervisor is:
Dr. Gary Barkhuizen
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland.
(Telephone: 64-9-373-7599 ext. 7689)

The Head of Department is:
Professor Rod Ellis
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland, New Zealand
(Telephone: 64-9-373-7599 ext. 4876)

For any questions regarding ethical concerns please contact:
The Chair, the University of Auckland Human Subjects Committee,
The University of Auckland, Research Office—Office of the Vice Chancellor,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand. Telephone: 373-7999 ext. 7830

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CONSENT FORM

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Title: Exploring the Role of Teacher Experiences and Beliefs in the Integration of Theory and Practice

Researcher: Anne Feryok

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand that I may withdraw this institution or any information traceable to the observations in it at any time up to 30 May 2003 without giving a reason.

- I agree to take part in this research.

Signed:

Name:
(please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 19.06.02 for a period of 3 years, from 19.06.02
Reference 2002/035
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Exploring the Role of Language Teacher Experiences and Beliefs in the Integration of Theory and Practice

To: Heads Of Departments of Tertiary Institutions

My name is Anne Feryok. I am a staff member and student at The University of Auckland (New Zealand) enrolled for a PhD Degree in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics. I am conducting this research for my thesis. It will explore how the experiences and beliefs of language teachers affect the way they integrate pedagogical theory and classroom practices after their Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program. I have chosen this field because of the growing interest in TEFL in non-English speaking countries such as Armenia.

One of the participants in this research studied at your institution. I would like to conduct an interview with you about the program in which the participant studied. The purpose of the interview is to provide me with background information about the education and training the participant received, and not about the participant herself. The topics I would like to cover include a description of the program, including the objectives, courses, and materials, and a brief history of the program, including the impact of Armenian independence on it. If you consented, I would audio tape the interview. If you wish, I will provide you with a list of questions beforehand. If you prefer the interview to be conducted in Armenian, I will provide a certified translation of the questions and a certified interpreter for the interview itself.

If you wish to allow me to interview you, please fill in the consent form and return it to me at the address in Armenia listed below.

Please be assured that all information will be kept confidential and that names will not be used.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this study possible. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at:

a.feryok@auckland.ac.nz or a_feryok@yahoo.com

I can also be contacted at:

(Contact details in Armenia to be added when available.)

My own PhD department’s contact information is:
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The Head of Department is:
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Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
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CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Exploring the Role of Teacher Experiences and Beliefs in the Integration of Theory and Practice

Researcher: Anne Feryok

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information traceable to me at any time up to 30 May 2003 without giving a reason.

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I agree/do not agree that interviews and discussions will be audio/video taped.
- I would like/would not like a copy of the interview questions in advance.
- I would like the interview to be conducted in English/Armenian.

Signed:

Name:
(please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on ______ for a period of 3 years, from __/__/__
Reference ______/_______