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ABSTRACT

After reviewing the language teaching/research situation this document offers a training paradigm that allows teachers to take what they already do and reposition and redefine it. In this way, the everyday concerns and issues facing them in the classroom may be translated into disciplined and structured research questions, which can then form the basis of small-scale investigative projects. Teachers may then be encouraged to comprehend how the outcomes of their projects can provide them with insight into the language learning process as well as enrich their teaching expertise, encourage collegial team work and create a collaborative atmosphere. This may also empower teachers to speak in an authoritative way about their profession, the language learning process and their teaching skills. Various diagrams and figures and 41 references are included. (KFT)

TEACHER RESEARCH : A classroom research paradigm as a powerful tool for professional development and discipline building.

By Patricia Delamere

Expecting a teacher to *do research* in addition to fulfilling all his/her responsibilities to his students, to his colleagues and to his superiors as well as meeting his own personal expectations and goals as a person and a professional is an unrealistic expectation, unless teacher trainers provide him with the minimum and basic tools for doing so: a clear explanation of why research of this kind is interesting and important and a simple framework to guide him through the process. After reviewing the language teaching/ research situation this article offers a training paradigm which allows teachers to take what they already do and reposition and redefine it. In this way the everyday concerns and issues facing them in their classrooms may be translated into disciplined and structured research questions, which can then form the basis of small-scale investigative projects. Teachers may then be encouraged to comprehend how the outcomes of their projects can provide them with insight into the language learning process as well as enrich their teaching expertise, encourage collegial team work and create a collaborative atmosphere (Clarke, 1998). This may also eventually empower teachers to speak in an authoritative way about their profession, the language learning process and their teaching skills.

BACKGROUND

The field of second language teaching as an independent and professional area of study within education is still a relatively young one. We can talk about a professional life-span of about 50 years. Particularly in North America, in the 1920's and 1930's foreign language teaching revolved around what was traditionally called grammar translation: the translation of literary texts and the teaching of grammar rules, almost exclusively in the written form. Later, foreign language educators began publishing articles questioning the validity of the old ways, namely that of grammar translation, as an appropriate and successful way to teach a language (Lado, 1957). Language teachers were seen as practitioners and

focus shifted from the written translations of texts to the teaching of the spoken language as a means of *communication* between individuals. The idea of the language as *interaction* began to take initial shape.

At the same time, Skinner's (1953, 1957) theory of learning - based on the idea that any learner learns by a process of stimulus and response - was taken up by theorists and practitioners in many areas of human learning . In the field of foreign language education, behavioural theory was adapted to language learning to some extent through the principles underlying what was to become known as the "Audio-Lingual Method". This new *method* utilised several new approaches: the language laboratory (an innovation in language learning technology at the time), the mimicry and memorisation of language patterns and the practising of these patterns as response to oral stimuli. However, this response patterning was often emphasised without attention to the meaning of what was being said or to the role of communication in the responses.

Behavioural psychology was questioned by Bruner (1966a, 1966b) who rejected the validity of rewards and punishments in human learning in favour of learner autonomy. As a humanist, he wrote about the importance of freedom for learners to be able to make their own decisions regarding their learning and take responsibility for it. Carl Rogers (1969) argued similarly that science is a a human concern and not one of rigid rules and approved procedures, and he criticised the then methods of educating scientists for not dealing with the question of human values in science. In 1964 Rivers questioned the appropriateness of applying so-called scientific theories to foreign language teaching. She argued that stimulus-response theory had its place in FLT, but should not be the only consideration. Since then language education has been guided by the writings of various humanistic educators not least of all Stevick (1996), who has so eloquently pointed out the importance of such aspects as independence in learning, self-esteem of the learner, and the role of empathy and affect.

However ALM (Audio Lingual Method) was popular among teachers and language students alike and many language schools sprang up as a result of this new and ostensibly highly effective method claiming incredible successes in teaching spoken languages. It represented change and innovation and to a degree it represented the practical application of a scientific theory of learning. It is important to note, that up to this time language teaching methods such as they were, had not been founded on learning theory and thus had very little scientific authority. With the advent of educational psychology and in particular behavioural psychology, educators could claim that their teaching methods, which could now be called a *methodology* were based on scientific theory. ALM was seen as the direct result of the application of a scientific (and therefore sound) theory to practice. To be able to base practical classroom methodology on a scientific theory gave the field an authority that it had not had before; the field had a theoretical voice and could hold its own with other educational sciences.

Research carried out during this period tended to deal with general language acquisition questions, for example whether the process of acquiring a second language could be compared to that of acquiring a first language and in order to test this hypothesis, morpheme orders were compared (Dulay and Burt, 1974) and later these orders were compared to input frequencies (Larsen-Freeman,. 1976, Long, 1981). Other areas of interest for the language researcher were the role that errors played in second language acquisition. Researchers asked whether patterns of errors that were discovered could somehow provide evidence of stages in the learning process (Corder, 1967) or student's interlanguage (Selinker, 1972), or whether *error correction* had a role in the second language classroom (Burt, M.K. 1975). Other research hypotheses focussed on an analysis of the discourse or interactions between native and non-native speakers (Hatch, 1978, Long, 1981a) and still others, largely influenced by Chomsky's (1959) belief that language learning was possible

due to the exclusively human innate capacity for language acquisition, investigated the relative effectiveness of formal language learning as compared to input rich natural language acquisition (Kraschen, 1976, 1994, Long, 1981 b). Much of this research, then, focussed on topics and themes that were theory driven and the findings were then applied later to the practice of teaching.

However studies in classroom learning were also being done, many of which focused on the, as some have called them, *designer* methodologies, such as Total Physical Response (Asher, 1969) and Suggestopedia (Lozanov, 1979) and questions such as whether the use of these new techniques and approaches in the classroom would show significant gains let us say in vocabulary retention over other vocabulary teaching techniques were asked and studied. Although these kinds of studies were seen to be more grounded in the practical realities of the classroom, they were carried out by researchers and very little work of this kind was reported by teachers.

Despite nearly 30 years of language acquisition research we find that the field is still searching for a complete understanding of how second languages are learned (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991) and indeed many of the earlier assertions are being questioned (Block, 1996). Much of it is characterised by " facts, opinions, explanations, positions, and perspectives that frequently exist in an uneasy state of complementarity and opposition" (Ellis 1994, p.689). This state of affairs has led some to suggest that teacher research is a rich, untapped and necessary source of information about the language learning process and should be facilitated and encouraged. As teacher trainers we would do well to try and combat the culture that has been created that represents a kind of division of labour - where theories are tested by theoretitions and the results of which are then applied by the practitioners in the classroom.

More recently we have seen developments of quite a different nature in the field of language teaching and learning – that is the advent of the use of the new technologies in the language learning classroom. Computer assisted language learning programmes and computer centred language learning systems are being developed and implemented at an astounding pace. Multimedia applications appear to hold tremendous potential for language instruction because they can deliver information through input rich environments, that is combinations of video, sound, animation, graphics and text in an interactive and user-controlled way (Brett, 1999) although little research into the effects of multimedia has been carried out.

Clearly research into multimedia, by its very nature, must attend to learners' motivation levels and recent research in cognitive processing supports the key role of motivation in language learning (Bialystok, 1978, McLaughlin, 1987). In order to become *intake* second language *input* may have to be *noticed* and *explicit* knowledge enables learners to notice features of input, which in turn may contribute to the acquisition of *implicit* knowledge. *Noticing* or consciousness may be key to the learning process (Schmidt, 1990) and it follows that as learners focus conscious attention on the form of the language, controlled responses become automatic freeing up conscious attention which can then be focused on new linguistic features (Brett 1999, p 12). As learners develop control over new linguistic information various factors may affect this process and these factors or individual differences among learners have been the focus of recent attention. The commonly held view is that every individual learner brings a variety of individual traits to the learning situation and Skehan (1989) has grouped them into 4 main areas: aptitude, motivation, learning strategies and cognitive and affective factors, including anxiety, introversion and so on. Ellis (1994) has also categorised the research on learner differences and finds that in general these individual traits affect the use of and choice of a variety of learning strategies which in turn affect the rate and level of achievement. Key among these traits is motivation. Crookes and Schmidt,

(1991) claim that a strong relationship exists between a learner's motivation and his learning at three levels: 1). at the micro level between motivation and the learner's attention to input and use of learning strategies, 2). at the classroom level between motivation and learning tasks and activities in the classroom and 3.) at the syllabus level between motivation and the content of the learning experience (p. 478). If a language learning experience is enjoyable, thought of as worthwhile, and preferable to other comparable learning experiences, then it is reasonable to assume that it may lead to better learning and encourage more time spent in learning (Brett, 1999 p. 15). Clearly these three levels lend themselves well to classroom research where it may be the teacher who has the best feel for what does or doesn't motivate his students, which factors may increase or decrease motivation and how an optimal learning environment may be created and managed.

TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

Donald Freeman (1998) proposes that in order to truly make research a central part of teaching we must redefine what we mean by research and modify and adapt the language we use to report it. He argues that if we see the teacher as the person, then research is little more than the process and that the traditional difference that exists between the practitioner and the researcher has to be re-evaluated (p.5). As we have already seen educational research has generated knowledge and teaching has implemented it. In other words, teaching is concerned with doing things so that others learn and research is concerned with asking questions, examining phenomena and documenting understandings for why things happen as they do. However, we find that most teachers do all of these things and more. A teacher organises the classroom environment so that his students learn but he rarely does this without asking questions and examining the issues that directly affect learning. Moreover, a teacher is involved with the immediate, local, relevant and urgent matters of learning. His concerns are

grounded in the daily realities of his classroom (Clarke, 1998 b, p. 597) and of the human bodies that fill its space.

So why then are teachers not more active in language research? The answers come immediately when this question is posed. Teachers tell you that there is no time and no one listens to them anyway. The gap between the decision makers, the administrators and the practitioners is too wide. Teacher trainers will tell you that the reason is because in teacher education courses little emphasis is paid to the why and how of research – these courses continue to produce "doers" and not "thinkers". Henry Widdowson (1998) has claimed that educational theory and research are only good when they can be tested out by teachers in the classroom and in that sense he sees teachers as researchers. He claims that teachers need the authority and expertise of theory to have a professional voice and to be heard: "we must have teacher education which is based on the theoretical applications of practice and the practical applications of theory". His point is well made, but we are still left with the problem of how to bridge this gap.

Freeman (1998) claims that teachers are the key players in both of these processes and he provides us with five propositions that may begin to build a theoretical position on what teacher-research is and how it can reshape the work of teachers and the knowledge base of teaching. By following these principles he states that teachers may reclaim their potential as key figures in the language learning and teaching process. His first proposition is based on Fine's (1994, 1996) proposal that the teacher-researcher is one who works *at the hyphen* of the two processes of teaching and researching. I believe this redefinition or *blurring of roles* (Boles, 1996) is the key to the new equation of teachers as researchers.

Freeman's second proposition claims that research can be defined as an orientation towards one's practice. He says it is a questioning attitude toward the world, leading to an inquiry within a disciplined framework. As such this proposition seems to deal with what it

means to make disciplined rather than intuitive statements about teaching. I have found this proposition to be the most salient for in-service teachers who almost without exception have responded positively to the idea that the comments and observations about our students or what did or didn't work in our classes that we make to our colleagues over morning coffee get us no further than the walls of the staff room. In training sessions a simple rewording of these off- the-cuff observations into scientific or *disciplined statements* about our teaching and our students' learning has encouraged and stimulated participants to see that they are indeed attending to legitimate research issues. For example a statement such as: *The students in my reading class do not like Book X* can be easily reformulated as *The students in my class listed the 5 books they liked the best among those we had read the previous term. Book X was only listed by 4/30 students and when it did appear on their lists, it was in 4th or 5th place.* (Freeman, 1998, p.8). Thus, it becomes a disciplined statement which tells us specifically what discovery was made by the teacher: the question that was asked, to whom it was addressed, how many responses were received and what these responses were. Workshop participants generally agree with some enthusiasm that this restatement would be a valid commentary to a School Head as a rationale for not using Book X. Furthermore, it becomes clear during discussions with participants that teachers in feel an obligation to share their answers, discoveries and knowledge by speaking authoritatively with colleagues, directors, and heads and so they are pleased to learn how to be more systematic and disciplined in their attention to classroom concerns, questions or *suspicions* about the learning process.

Freeman's third proposition is that there is no publicly recognised *discipline* of teaching and that furthermore teachers do not think of themselves as producing knowledge, they think of themselves as using it (p.10). With respect to this proposition I have found that it is a good exercise to have in-service teachers reflect on what the word scientific means to them and to break down the taboo that this word evokes. The following problem solving

activity is offered by Freeman and I find it is best done in pairs or small groups to encourage discussion: How do you react to the word *research* ? How do you define the word *research*? What does the word *scientific* mean to you? If someone says to you *"But that isn't scientific*!" what does he or she mean? Where do your ideas about what is or isn't scientific come from ? (1998, p. 4).

Through controlled discussion participants can be encouraged to see that *scientific* refers to factual and disciplined rather than subjective and intuitive and that research is a systematic process of inquiry by which intuitive phenomena can be transformed into objective, justifiable and demonstrable statements.

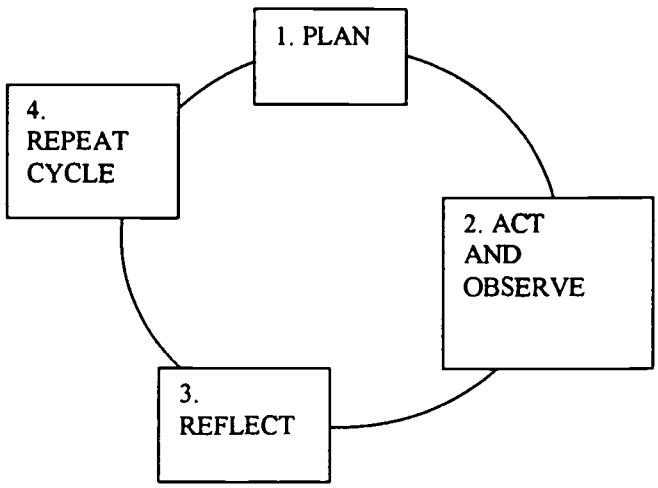
Freeman's proposition four claims that inquiry and not procedure is the basis of teacher research and further legitimises teachers' questions and reflections about what they do every day. He says that "inquiry is a state of being engaged in what is going on in the classroom that drives one to better understand what is happening – and can happen – there" (p.14).

Proposition five states that in order to create a discipline of teaching making ones findings public is required. To do so, he says, teacher-researchers need to explore new and different ways of telling what has been learned through their inquiries. This final proposition is often the one which frightens teacher-practitioners the most. The idea of going public with their findings (writing an article, giving a presentation) is an intimidating one for most teachers, so this is where in-service trainers have the responsibility of providing clear and simple guidelines for disseminating or sharing classroom research findings. I have found that one way to do this is by providing examples of other teachers' work such as simple reports of classroom observations and case studies illustrating how interesting it is to read other people's *stories, anecdotes* and *experiences* no matter how simple they may seem. The key here seems to be to demystify what it means to share one's work with others. Just as the key to getting teachers to do classroom research is to clarify that doing research is using the right language

to ask familiar questions about what goes on in the classroom and often doing little more than documenting the actions and discoveries that they are already accustomed to making.

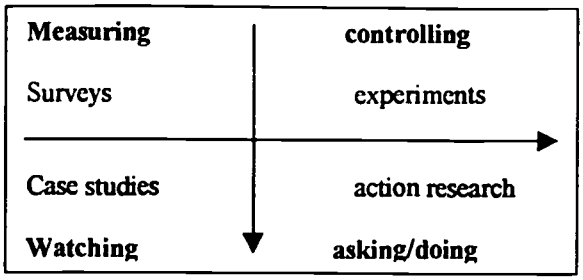
A SIMPLE PARADIGM

Richards (1994) describes action research as a teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom dynamics and to bring about changes in classroom practices. Nunan (1989) similarly documents the action research cycle as a cyclical process consisting of a number of predictable steps- plan, act observe, reflect and repeat the cycle:



The Action Research Cycle.

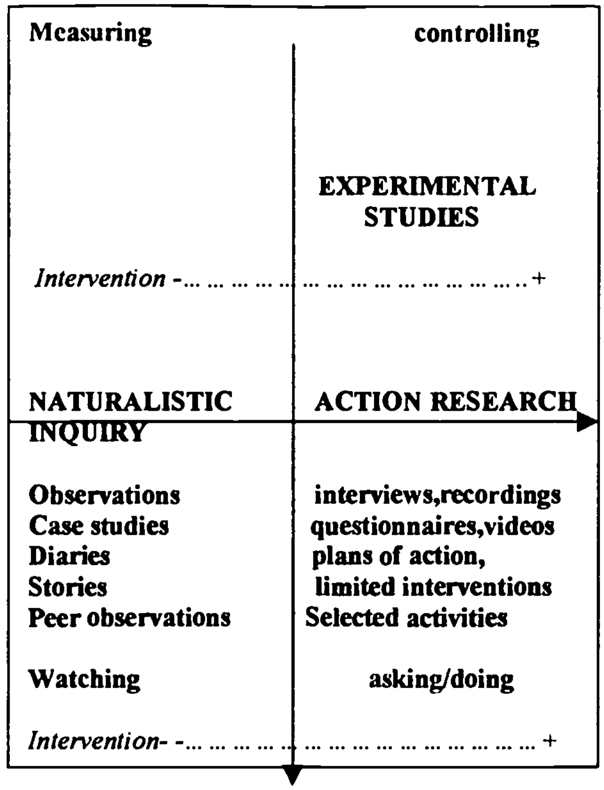
This procedure does not generally involve controlled intervention on the part of the researcher and can be easily applied by teachers who are interested in modifying, changing or improving their classroom methods and procedures. In in-service workshops I have found participants to show interest in the action research cycle and how it fits into the general research design matrix:



General Research Design matrix.

(after van Lier, types of research, 1988,p.57)

The differences between the varying types of research are easily assimilated once it is made clear that the distinction depends on the amount of intervention by the researcher. In experimental research the researcher exerts control and intervenes. In naturalistic inquiry the researcher does not intervene, rather he observes and records what happens. In action research the researcher typically intervenes but with limited possibilities of control. Action research has more to do with setting in motion a plan or action that allows student behaviour to change and then sitting back to watch and document what happens. Classroom teachers seem to be comfortable with the idea that their research projects will fall into the watching , doing and asking categories. They are also comfortable with the idea that the plan stage of the cycle incorporates the selection of instruments to be used to collect data and that instruments can be as simple as student questionnaires, learner diaries, teachers' journals, video recordings, peer observations and so on.



Levels of Researcher Intervention.

(adapted from van Lier, types of research, 1988:57)

Richards and Lockhart (1994) provide a very useful set of discussion questions which may be used to enable teachers to practice selecting appropriate instruments. Two examples are:

(a) You have been teaching English to elementary students for several years, and colleagues point out that you have developed a special kind of "teacher's English". You want to investigate whether this is true, what these features are, and whether it helps or hinders your teaching.

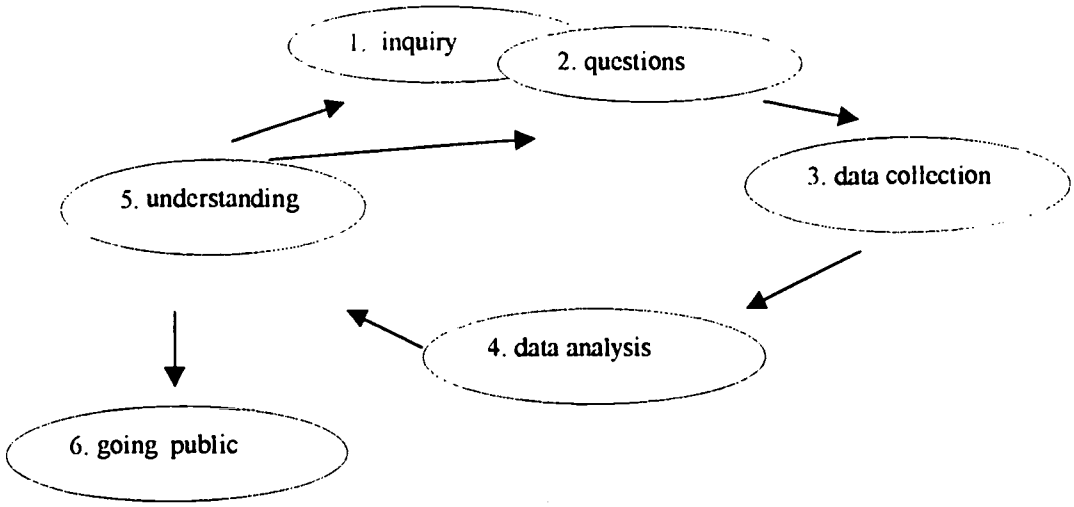
(b) You are very conscientious about planning lessons, but somehow they never seem to go according to plan. You rarely have time to get through all the material that you had planned. You want to find out why this is happening (p.14-15).

Participants enjoy discussing the appropriateness of instruments for these examples as they are familiar issues for classroom teachers. Typical suggestions are for (a) a peer observation or an audio or video recording of the class, and for (b) after lively discussion regarding the value of good lesson planning, the importance of overtly opening and closing each class activity, the relevance of sequencing activities and pacing transitions between them, the following suggestions are usually offered: student questionnaires and interviews which elicit student reaction to the number of activities per class and attitude toward time well spent in class.

Action research then is a form of self- reflective inquiry which follows a series of steps: identify the problem, seek knowledge, plan an action, implement the action, observe the action, reflect on the observation, revise the plan and repeat the cycle if necessary. This process is a search for solutions to locally relevant problems by taking an action and systematically observing what follows. It is not research which requires masses of data driven statistical analyses in order to have relevance to other practitioners in the field, but it does require attention to detail. Audio or video recording texts have to be transcribed (Moscowitz, 1967), testing instruments such as student questionnaires have to be checked for instability and practice effect (Brown, 1988, Nunan, 1992) and results must be analysed and answers counted to generate the numbers and percentages from which conclusions may be drawn.

GETTING TEACHERS INVOLVED

Freeman (1998) emphasises the need for teachers to empower themselves and exercise their authority. He believes that one way to do this is by going public with their research findings His teacher-researcher cycle then incorporates this extra stage:



The Teacher Researcher Cycle

Freeman (1998 p. 147)

Freeman's teacher -researcher cycle constitutes 3 phases:

1. developing a research plan – inquire and question (question, plan, act)
2. collecting and analysing the data – collect data and analyse data (observe, react, reflect)
3. going public – understand and publish (revise and repeat cycle)

In teacher training sessions once the basic paradigm has been understood by participants I have often found it necessary to illustrate a piece of teacher research. Among the examples I use are Kebir's (1994) paper entitled *An action research look at the communication strategies of adult learner*, where she documents her classroom research with adult immigrants in Australia. She wondered what her learners could and could not do in English while communicating amongst themselves so she investigated what range of strategies they used to communicate without any formal teaching. Her method was simple: she taped her subjects engaged in informal conversation using a very simple stimulus: a picture of a river with a boat, a stick figure walking a dog on one bank and three houses on the opposite bank.

She transcribed the interaction and selected instances of communication strategies. Her equipment was poor and the process time consuming but she produced a list of communication strategies. This finding led her to ask more questions, several of which were too ambitious but finally she formulated her hypothesis: *can useful insights on communication strategies be gained by observing native speakers performing the same tasks as non-native speakers?* To this end she incorporated the use of NS texts into her lessons and found that she needed to spend more time in class teaching verbal fillers and less time on grammatical accuracy.

I ask participants to summarise Kebir's work by fitting her report into the teacher – researcher paradigm. In this way it is clear to participants that step 6 of the cycle involved her reporting her findings to her colleagues at the 1992 TESOL convention where she found it very encouraging that there were so many other teachers like herself eager to share their experiences.

Where a research report on secondary students is appropriate I have used *Using more Indonesian in the Classroom, (*Nicholson in Freeman, 1998, p. 225) where the author was concerned about the lack of use of the target language in the classroom and she wanted to increase its use beyond the language relating to classroom tasks. Her first move was to tape a lesson where she found that 85% was teacher talk with classroom directions given in English. Thus she invited her students to write down with her the expressions in English that were used for classroom procedures and to add their own to this list which was then posted on the classroom walls and practised on a weekly basis. She found that the students became more collaborative and their use of these expressions increased, but she was always the initiator, became very tired and felt that the rigid nature of the project somehow limited spontaneous language acquisition. She planned more classroom research to investigate this further.

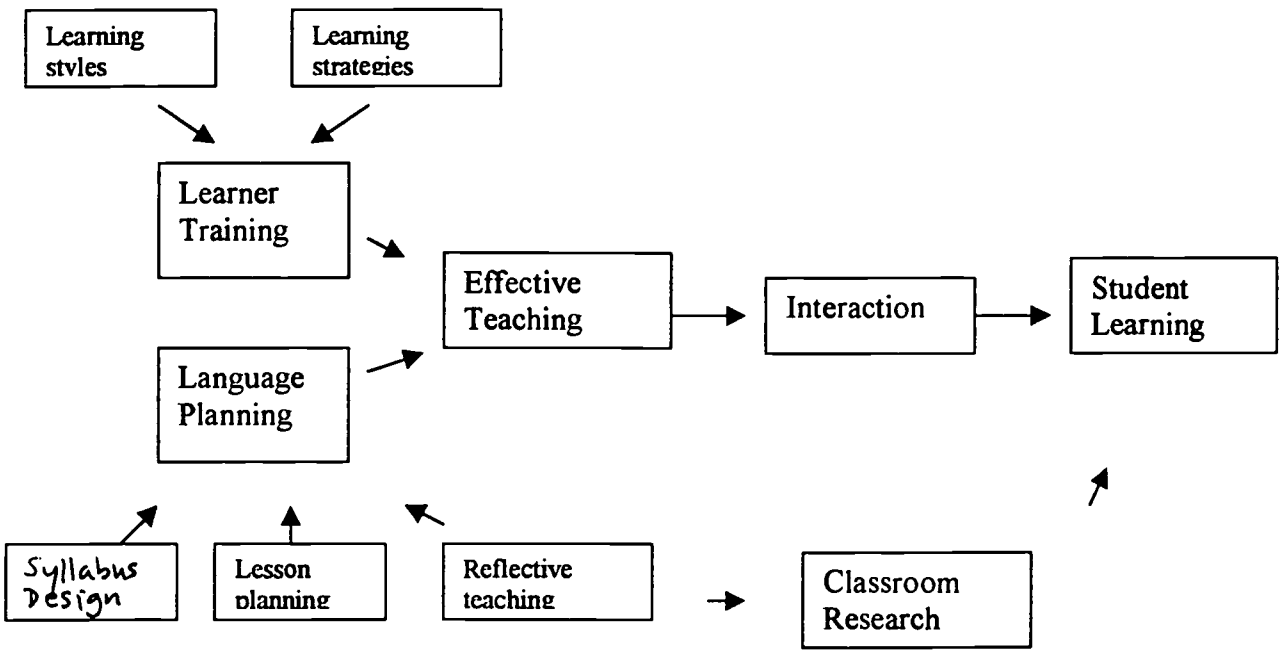
For primary students I use *Mistakes are for Learning,* (Vithoulkas in Freeman, (1998, p. 239). This is a particularly effective example because of its charming visuals and the simplicity of its objective : to find out how she corrected her students errors and how they responded to her corrections. She first attempted to tape her lesson but found it technically impossible. Instead she devised a questionnaire with 5 simple questions: " Is it all right to make mistakes", "Why do you feel this way?" "How do you feel when you make mistakes?" (with faces to complete) and so on. She tallied her answers and found that all students believed it was all right to make mistakes, that they felt a range of emotions, and that their favourite error correction expression was "*Good try, but not quite right*" , followed by "*ask your neighbour*" and "*This is how you say it*", their least favourite expression was "*That's wrong*!" (p. 62). She found that all but two of the children wanted her to correct them. She also invited a facilitator to observe her class and finally felt satisfied that she now had a list of positive correction phrases to use. Her plan for future research was to investigate when and what she corrected.

Participants are very comfortable with these case studies and are surprised to learn that when you report your research you are expected to say when things don't work and how you changed your mind and tried another approach. They are also surprised and comforted as they work through the exercise of analysing reports into the 6 steps of the teacher- researcher cycle to see that even though a particular report may not follow a clear procedure, what it has to say is relevant nonetheless.

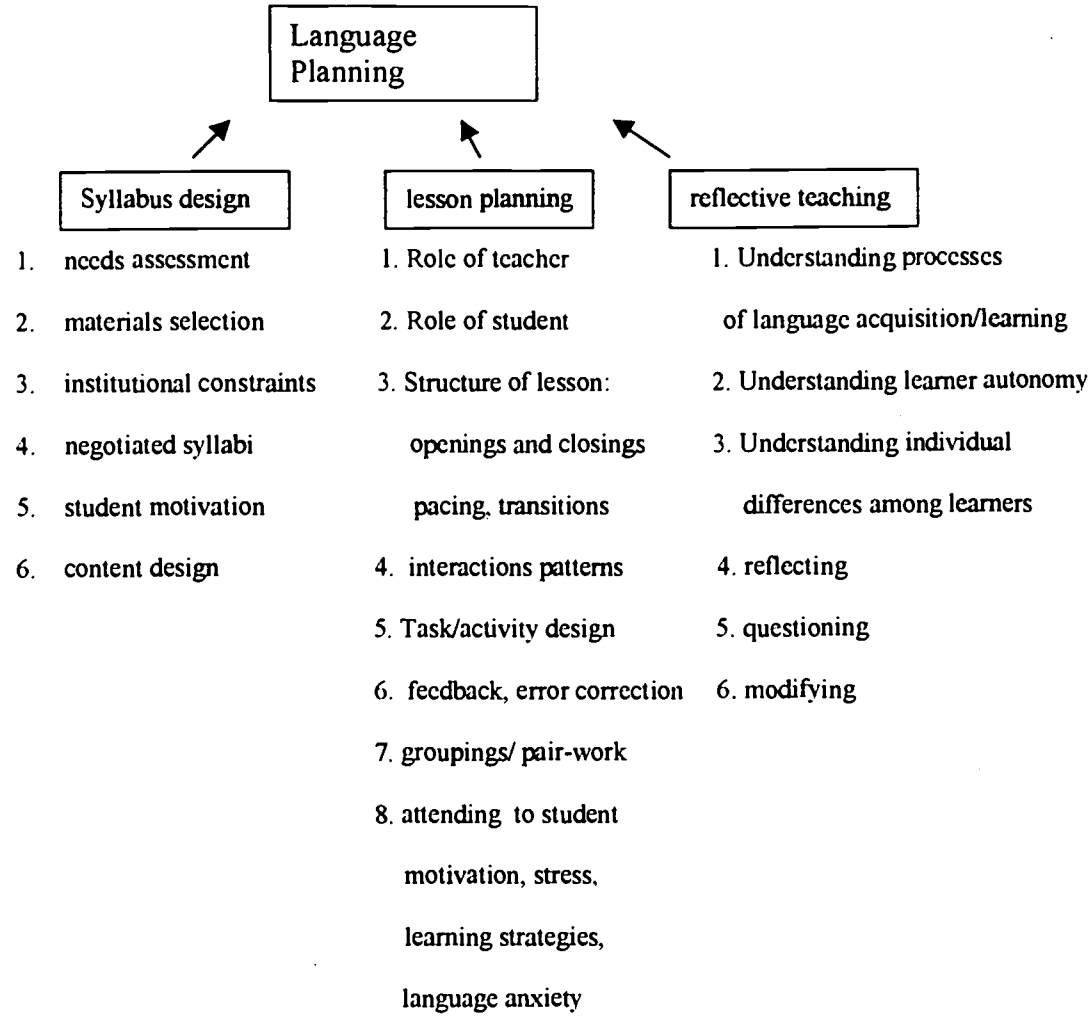
CRITICAL ISSUES IN EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Other real life case studies which can be used in training sessions are reported in Richards and Lockhart (1994, pp.69-200) and they cover a range of situations from primary through to adult and report small scale projects covering a range of classroom inquiries

dealing with learning strategies, negotiating course content with students, transitions during lessons, grouping arrangements in the classroom, error correction and so on. However, I have found one or two case studies as examples to be enough for participants to feel ready to begin brain-storming their own *suspicions and concerns* about what happens in their own classrooms and from these to propose their own research questions and subsequent action plans. As a guide to them at this stage the following maps have been useful as a framework to focus on the issues involved in effective teaching and how classroom research can define, refine, clarify and professionalise these issues:



Dynamics of Effective Teaching: map 1.



Effective Teaching: map 2 – Elements of Good Language Planning.

Maps 1 and 2 serve to focus teachers` attention on the many critical issues involved in effective teaching and they may be used at varying levels. Frequent topics for discussion are : learner styles (Kinsella, 1995), learner strategies (Oxford, 1990) and how the former may result in and affect the choice of the latter (Skehan, 1989), or the recent research on language anxiety (Fernando Rubio Alcalá, 2000) may be considered appropriate depending on the range of topics of inquiry proposed by participants. At the very least these maps serve to stimulate discussion and participants can then be encouraged to propose their initial reflections or concerns about their teaching, formulate a disciplined research question or

questions and plan their inquiries following the steps in the model. Implementation of teacher- research requires the provision of support from the trainer, from colleagues and often from school heads and directors, however, I have not found it impossible and the training paradigm described here has been successful in setting in motion several small-scale studies. Examples of classroom inquiries posed by Spanish secondary teachers of English (Andalusian Board of Education In-service Teacher Training Programme, Seville, 1995), and Czech and Polish lead teachers (Teacher Training Project, Czech Republic, 1999) are included in Appendix 1 below.

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APPENDIX 1

Spanish secondary teachers of English research plans:

1. (a) We teach English to a class of teenagers who look at their teacher, like most 13-14 year olds do, as a "boss". We feel very uncomfortable about that. We wonder if negotiating the course content with them, would be a good way of initiating a change of attitude on the part of the students. We plan to divide the class into small groups, they will work on setting up a priority order of course content, In addition, we will keep a teacher journal by spending about two minutes each day after each class. We plan to do this over a period of a month.

(b) We wonder if giving our students a larger role in planning the types of activities used during lessons would be a good way of providing them with more opportunities to practice English. W plan to provide types of activities to our students and give them the chance of choosing the best ones and suggesting new ones. We will keep a short teacher journal after each class. We plan to do this experiment over a period of two months. (Amparo Sánchez Mira and Isabel Codón Perez, Seville, 1995)

2. We usually teach English to secondary classes of mixed abilities and we have a lot of problems when we do oral practice. Generally speaking we have found that less able students are unwilling to use English. They become embarrassed when they speak in front of the other students. We want to find some way to increase their confidence and improve their fluency. We believe in pair-work, but what is the best type of pair? Is it preferable to have

a pair made up of a less able student with a partner of better ability or a pair made up of students of the same ability? We plan to explore the effects of both types of pairing arrangements: same ability students and mixed-ability students. We also plan to ask students their opinion about how they prefer being grouped. Finally, we plan to carry out this investigation over the period of one term. (Mª Concepción Fragua Ferrera and Concepciòn Jiménez Martos, Seville, 1995.)

3. We know that we are correcting our students' errors, but we don't know how we are correcting them. We want to find out what strategies and techniques we use and analyse them to see if they are effective or not. We want to find out what correction strategies we use in oral and written activities by classroom observation through video recording and by asking a colleague to observe our class and by analysing our blackboard correction and individual student correction. (Mª Remedios Butròn Caballo and Rosa Maria Rodrigues Tuñas, Seville, 1995)

4. (a) Our students do not use English in class. We would like to know what are their feelings about using English in class. We will use a questionnaire and then study the data.

(b) Given that we hypothesise that the students consider English like any other subject and they do not use it in class, how can we increase their use of English and active participation in class? The second stage of our project therefore will be to observe the efficacy of specific student selected activities over a one year period in order to boost their self confidence and improve their fluency. (Mª Angeles Sosa Caro and Pablo Dugo González, Seville, 1995).

The following are Czech and Polish lead teacher expressions of concern about teaching English at the primary and secondary level (Czech Republic Teacher Training Programme, 1999). They are initial reflections for classroom inquiry and mirror the current issues facing teachers of English in the Czech Republic:

1. Does the use of the mother tongue slow down the second language learning process?
2. "I don't want to play games and songs. I want to learn"
3. Why do students learn English? What activities do they like?
4. My concern is the use of the first language in pair-work activities
5. Why are students reluctant to speak English in class? How can I make the most possible motivating environment?
6. What effective strategies help students to learn well?
7. How can I facilitate student's independence?
8. Interference of the first foreign language (German or Russian) on the second foreign language (English). How to deal with the positive and negative influence of vocabulary and grammar structures, how to predict and avoid problems and how to use the similarities in the best way to benefit from them?
9. My concern is with effective teaching of extra-curricular activities for multi-ethnic groups.
10. Which elements of self-direction can be implemented easily and which need time and training? (Poland)
11. I would like to explore the use of drama in my class (Poland).
12. My concern is in improving my listening classes. (Poland)

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