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**Changing perspectives on syllabus design in ELT:
Textbook trends and tertiary teacher decision-making**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
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Abstract

By the mid-1900s, the impact of behaviourism and linguistic structuralism had led, in the area of second/ additional language teaching, to the development of structural syllabuses and audio-lingual methodology. It was not long, however, before both behaviourism and full-blown linguistic structuralism began to be challenged, challenges which underpinned a raft of proposals relating to both methodology and syllabus design. In some cases, the distinction between syllabus and methodology has become blurred to such an extent that it has been suggested that any attempt to differentiate between the two is irrelevant or even, perhaps, misguided. There can be few who do not accept that the interaction between the *what* (content) and the *how* (methodology) of language teaching is a critical one. This should not, however, mean that any research that focuses on the content of language courses is no longer relevant. Even so, while there is a considerable body of research that relates primarily to methodology, there is much less that relates primarily to syllabus. It is with issues relating to the language syllabus that this thesis is concerned. More specifically, it explores the impact that a range of syllabus design proposals has had, directly or indirectly, on a sample of English language textbook writers and English language teachers.

One part of the research programme reported here focused on English language teachers and language programme managers operating in the tertiary education sector. A sample of English language teachers who completed a questionnaire-based survey were found, in general, to favour clearly articulated blended syllabuses that include a primary focus on vocabulary and grammar and, to a lesser extent, discourse features. However, there was considerable disagreement about the nature of the content that is appropriate at different levels and evidence of a high degree of uncertainty and confusion in the area of achievement objectives setting and discourse-based specifications. In addition, approximately one third of the respondents reported that they relied heavily on commercially produced textbooks in determining the detailed content of the language courses for which they were responsible. A sample of language programme managers/co-ordinators who participated in semi-structured interviews all stressed the importance of having explicit syllabuses for the courses and programmes offered by their institutions. Grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills and learning skills were each considered to play an important role in General English (GE) courses, and skills and discourse features were considered fundamental in the case of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. In only one case, however, did the programme documentation provided by the interview participants include a reasonably clear indication of course content and, once again, as in the case of the teachers who took part in the questionnaire-based survey, there was evidence of considerable reliance on commercially produced textbooks in determining detailed course content.

In another part of the research programme, representative samples of widely used, commercially produced textbooks focusing on GE or EAP were analysed from the perspective of the nature of the syllabuses underpinning them. *So far as the GE textbooks are concerned*, it was found that the structural syllabus was becoming situationalized and lexicalized by the mid-1960s, with indications of incipient

functionalization emerging in the early 1970s. Some attempts to design textbooks around a more wholly functional syllabus in the late 1970s and 1980s appear to have been largely abandoned by the 1990s. By that time, the syllabuses underpinning GE textbooks were found to have a largely situationalized and functionalized lexico-grammatical core. From the 1990s onwards, there was an increasing focus on skills (including learning skills), with a limited range of discourse features being added to the mix, yielding a more complex type of hybrid syllabus. With very few exceptions, the writers of commercially available GE textbooks appear to have shown little enthusiasm for syllabuses that are primarily lexical, task-based or relational in orientation. *In the case of the EAP textbooks*, the underlying syllabuses were found to be largely discourse-based, the primary emphasis being on cohesive devices and, to various extents and in varying combinations, paragraphing, generic cross-disciplinary organizational structures (e.g. general/ particular and problem/solution) and a variety of text-types and discourse modes. While some textbook writers appear to have accommodated the different strands of what are essentially hybrid syllabuses with little difficulty, others appear to have been less successful in doing so, leading to a somewhat disjointed, even haphazard approach to syllabus specification.

While several proponents of different approaches to syllabus design have tended to reject other approaches out of hand, textbook writers and language teachers appear, in general, to have opted for a compromise position. However, that compromise appears to have been, at times, an uneasy one, one that can result in syllabuses that are neither coherent nor theoretically grounded.

KEY WORDS:

English as a second/additional language; English for Academic Purposes (EAP) textbooks; general English language textbooks; language syllabus design; language teachers and language syllabuses

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated, in loving memory, to my Mum (Alice Joyce Duncan). Her passing away has left a void in my life that can never be filled. I learnt to have perseverance by watching and learning from her unbelievable strength and dignity in the face of the many difficulties she had to endure throughout her 86 years. She taught me to be proud of who I am. My passion for learning I owe to her and her push to provide her girls with the educational opportunities she would so dearly have loved to have herself.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the research

1.1 Starting out

This thesis explores proposals relating to second language syllabus design, seeking to determine what impact they have had on the syllabuses underpinning the design of widely used textbooks intended primarily for adult learners and the ways in which teachers and language programme managers and co-ordinators approach the design of syllabuses for the language courses and programmes they offer. A number of key definitional boundaries for the term ‘syllabus’ will be explored in *Chapter three*.

1.2 Rationale for the research: A personal perspective

I was born and raised in South Africa. Unlike the majority of mixed raced South Africans, however, my first language was English and my schooling was conducted through the medium of English. I was, however, required to learn Afrikaans, a language I associated with oppression and victimisation. My first experience of learning an additional language was therefore more negative than positive. The syllabus for the core language acquisition component was largely structurally based, the emphasis being on the accurate reproduction of decontextualized clauses and sentences (which generally had little or no relevance to the lives of the students). While reading and writing were taught as separate components of the programme, they were generally related to the core language acquisition component. No reference was made to reading skills in the reading component, the expectation being that L1 reading skills would be transferred automatically to the L2. Students were simply required to read passages in Afrikaans and, without any direct strategy assistance from the teachers, answer comprehension questions on these passages. Writing was product-centred. Students were given a topic and expected to write one or more paragraphs on that topic. These paragraphs were then returned accompanied by a grade and generally covered in corrections in red ink. I also learned Latin at school. In this case, the teaching was based largely on the grammar-translation approach. My memories of learning Latin consist of memorizing lists of vocabulary and verb conjugations

and then having to translate paragraphs of Latin into English and vice versa. The topics covered had no bearing on our daily lives. Instead, they focused on what could be referred to as ‘ancient lord/master exchanges’.

In such a context, it is not surprising that I developed very little interest in second language learning during my years of schooling. After school, I went on to teacher training college where I decided to take German as an extramural activity, largely because I had heard that the German classes were more fun than many of the classes in other subjects that were available. The teacher, an English man trained in the U.K., adopted an approach that I can now identify as having been influenced by the development of the notional/functional approach to syllabus design (see, for example, Wilkins, 1976) and the early stages of the development of what is now commonly referred to as ‘communicative language teaching’. That experience was much more positive and enjoyable than that of learning Afrikaans and Latin. However, it was no more productive. Little of what I learned then had been retained three years later.

In my first few years as a teacher at a high school in South Africa, I focused largely on teaching geography, mainly through the medium of English. I was, however, also required to teach it through the medium of Afrikaans for those students for whom Afrikaans was a first language. As my own proficiency in Afrikaans was limited, I was obliged to develop coping strategies. I focused on improving my subject-specific vocabulary and adopted a largely task-centred methodology that required the students to do much of the talking, reading and writing involved in pairs and groups. This experience was to prove fundamental to my development as a teacher and, later, as a teacher of English as a second/additional language.

In 1998, I emigrated from South Africa to New Zealand. Initially, I taught at intermediate school level in an area where many of the students had begun their schooling in a Māori immersion context. For many of them, English, particularly reading and writing in English, presented particular challenges. It also presented challenges for the increasing number of new migrants whose presence was

beginning to be felt in New Zealand schools. Determined to find ways of helping these children, I decided that I must learn more about L2 education. Therefore, at the end of 1998, I enrolled for a short course in the teaching of English to new migrants and then began to teach English to adult migrants on a voluntary basis in my spare time. In the following year, I enrolled for a further short course, a course in teaching English to adults (Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA)). That course represented a turning point for me. This was something of genuine interest. However, I realised that I had much more to learn, both about the teaching of English and about the teaching and learning of second/ additional languages more generally. I decided to enrol in evening classes in German to gain further experience as a language learner and also in a post-graduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics (Second Language Teaching). I was then offered, and accepted, a position as a teacher of English in a language school where most of the students were preparing for entry to an English-medium university. The teaching focused on a combination of core language development and writing skills development (International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparation). Although there were prescriptions for these courses (generally limited to a few lines), there were no syllabuses other than those embedded in the recommended textbooks. There was, furthermore, no genuine match between these syllabuses and the prescriptions. So far as methodology was concerned, the textbooks used were largely oriented towards what has come to be referred to as 'communicative methodologies', methodologies with which the students appeared to be comfortable. My particular concern, however, related to course content. It seemed to me that there were significant gaps in the syllabuses on which the textbooks were based and also that these syllabuses did not adhere to any readily detectable principles. My own experience of designing syllabuses for English as an additional language was limited. I therefore decided to undertake some further study in the form of a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics with a focus on second language teaching. During that programme, I had an opportunity to learn more about approaches to L2 syllabus design and took a particular interest in those approaches whose development had predated my own involvement in the area.

During my studies, I became increasingly aware of the fact that syllabus design proposals often seemed to reflect developments in areas other than the teaching of second/ additional languages, such as, for example, psychology, linguistics and education. Following an appointment to a position that involved language teacher education, I also became aware that while many trainees expressed an interest in language teaching methodology and in the developments that had taken place in that area, few appeared to be equally interested in language syllabus design or to be aware of the issues with which those who proposed new approaches to language syllabus design were grappling, issues that included the increasing impact of globalisation (which was reducing the distinction between EFL and ESL as more and more learners became involved in, for example, serial migration) and the increasing commodification of education that was emerging as a result of the impact of a widespread neo-liberal agenda on educational institutions. It was this, in particular, that underpinned my decision to undertake doctoral level research that focused on L2 syllabus design and, in particular, my decision to focus on the impact of various syllabus design proposals on a range of widely used textbooks and on those involved in designing L2 syllabuses and/or in teaching English as a second/ additional language. Note that the distinction between 'foreign language' and 'second language' generally relates to the context in which the language is learned (a country in which it is not a primary language of interaction in the first case). The term 'additional language' may be used with reference to either (or some combination of the two), a critical factor being that it does not refer to a language commonly used by parents or caregivers

1.3 An introduction to the overall aims and key research questions and research methods

The overall aim of the research reported here was to attempt to determine the extent to which proposals relating to L2 syllabuses have impacted on the design of widely used textbooks intended primarily for adult learners and on the decisions made by language teachers and language programme managers/ co-ordinators working in a tertiary education context. The decision to focus largely on those operating in a tertiary education context related in large measure to the fact that they, unlike teachers operating in schools, are not generally constrained by national curricula (and, in some cases, also by the content of textbooks

specifically approved by Ministries of Education) and are, therefore, obliged to make decisions about course and programme content, decisions that presuppose some awareness of issues associated with L2 syllabus design.

The primary (overarching) questions underpinning and guiding the research were:

In what ways, and to what extent (if at all) have the syllabuses underpinning a sample of widely used textbooks (designed for general and/or academic purposes) that are intended primarily for adult learners of English changed since the 1960s, and can any major influences or trends be detected in relation to any such changes?

How do a sample of teachers and programme managers/co-ordinators working in the context of higher educational institutions decide on the nature of the syllabuses underpinning the courses and programmes they offer for learners of English, and to what extent, if at all, are any decisions they make about textbook selection influenced by the nature of the syllabuses that underpin these textbooks?

In seeking to address the first of these questions, I analyzed a sample of textbooks produced by major publishers from the 1960s onwards with a view to determining the extent to which the syllabuses on which they were based had changed and developed over time and whether any major syllabus design trends were detectable in the case of those textbooks - both general and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) focused - that are currently readily available and widely used in the teaching of adult learners.

In seeking to answer the second of these questions, I began by conducting a questionnaire-based survey of a sample of teachers working in a tertiary education context. This questionnaire-based survey involved a sample of teachers of English as a second/ additional language who were located in five different countries. The survey focused primarily on how and why these teachers made decisions about course and programme content. However, because syllabus design necessarily

goes hand in hand with overall objectives setting and syllabus implementation, and because decisions made in all of these related areas are likely to be influenced in a major way by the professional backgrounds of teachers, questions relating to other areas, including the teachers' professional backgrounds, objectives setting, methodology and textbook use, were also included.

The questionnaire-based survey was followed by semi-structured interviews involving a sample of language centre managers/ teacher co-ordinators, all of whom were working in the context of tertiary institutions based in a single country (New Zealand). These interviews also focused primarily on how and why decisions were made about course and programme content. Once again, however, other issues that have a bearing on syllabus design were included.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis begins (*Chapter 2*) with a critical review of selected literature on various proposals concerning the design of L2 syllabuses. This review is presented in the context of a discussion of the intellectual and socio-political environment in which these proposals were forwarded.

This is followed by a chapter in which the overall research approach and the research methods/ techniques are outlined (*Chapter 3*).

The following chapter (*Chapter 4*) reports on the analysis of a range of widely used textbooks produced from the 1960s onwards from the perspective of the syllabus design principles underlying each of them. The chapter ends with an overview and discussion of the findings with particular reference to syllabus design trends and the extent to which these trends appear to have been influenced by a range of proposals relating to L2 syllabus design.

This is followed (*Chapter 5*) by a report on a questionnaire-based survey involving a sample of teachers of English based in five different countries. This chapter begins by outlining the nature of the survey and the considerations that were taken into account in designing and trialling the questionnaire, in determining the target population, in distributing and collecting the questionnaires

and in analysing the data. It then provides an overview and discussion of the data collected.

The next chapter (*Chapter 6*) reports on the findings of semi-structured interviews involving a sample of English language programme managers/teacher coordinators associated with the tertiary education sector in New Zealand. It begins with a discussion of the nature of the interviews, the reasons why a particular group was targeted, and the considerations that were taken into account in conducting, recording, transcribing and reporting on the data. It then provides an overview and discussion of the interview data.

The final chapter (*Chapter 7*) revisits the research questions, providing an overview and discussion of the findings of the research as a whole and the conclusions reached concerning the interaction between L2 syllabus design proposals and the ways in which textbook writers, language programme managers and English language teachers operating in tertiary education contexts made decisions about syllabus design.

Chapter Two

A contextualized critical review of selected literature on approaches to the design of syllabuses for additional languages

A syllabus is a way of describing something which must be learnt for pedagogic purposes, and the chief characteristic of an educational institution is its focusing function; that is, an educational institution acts as a physical and temporal focus for learning. The limitations in time and place provide the major differences between formal and informal learning: there is an implicit promise in setting up an educational institution to use procedures that will in some sense be more efficient than the more or less random ones of informal learning in the world outside. And a syllabus is a statement of efficient learning (Brumfit, 1980, p. 57).

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the use of the terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus' (2.2), followed by a discussion of selected literature relating to the context in which a range of proposals concerning the design of L2 syllabuses have been forwarded (2.3). It then critically reviews selected literature relating to a number of specific syllabus design proposals (2.4) before ending with some comments relevant to the thesis as a whole that emerge out of the review (2.5).

2.2 Use of the terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus'

The term 'curriculum' is sometimes used in a way that is synonymous with 'syllabus'. More often, however, the term 'curriculum' is used to refer to all aspects of a programme (including materials, methodology and assessment) and the term 'syllabus' (often considered to be part of the former) to refer to the content of learning:

The term *curriculum* is open to a wide variety of definitions; in its narrowest sense it is synonymous with the term syllabus, as in the specification of the content and ordering of *what* is to be taught; in the

wider sense it refers to all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of an educational program, the *why*, *how* and *how well* together with the *what* of the teaching-learning process (Finney, 2001, p. 70).

For Breen (1987a, p.82), a syllabus is "a plan of *what is to be achieved through teaching and learning*", a definition that can encompass organizing principles that are language content-based, activity-based or some combination of the two. In connection with this, it is interesting to note that Breen has questioned whether the plan [syllabus] should be "limited to a delineation of objectives or might . . . also serve as a means towards the objectives" (p. 82). If the latter is the case, then it could be argued that what we have is an example of what Crombie (1988, p. 288) has referred to as a 'hidden syllabus' (i.e. one that is implicit rather than explicit).

Wilkins (1976) has distinguished between what he refers to as 'synthetic' and 'analytic' syllabuses (a similar distinction also being made by Long and Crookes (1993)¹, the former focusing on language elements, the latter on communicative purposes. For him, the structural syllabus is an example of the former (relying on learners' capacity to re-synthesize elements of language introduced separately), the notional-functional syllabus type which he proposed (see explanation of this and other terms in 2.3 below) being an example of the latter. Breen (1987a & b), on the other hand, argues that both structural and notional-functional syllabuses, which he refers to as 'formal' and 'functional' respectively, are similar in overall type, being representative of 'propositional' plans, with task-based and process syllabuses being representative of 'process' plans (Breen, 1987a p. 84) and with process-syllabuses being referred to as "an emergent paradigm which challenges established frames of reference" (Breen, 1987b, p. 157). He notes in particular, that process plans do not obviate the need for propositional plans (Breen, 1987b, p.170), that is, that task-based syllabuses, for example, cannot stand alone as the organizational principle on which the syllabus is based.

¹ According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004), the terms 'synthetic' and 'analytic' were used with reference to language learning, methodology in particular, as early as 1853 by Marcel who, in an attempt to define the characteristics of a 'good method' of teaching, identified twenty 'axiomatic truths of methodology', the most important of which was, he claimed, the 'method of nature', which he defined as being 'analytic'. Using the example of a child learning its mother tongue, Marcel noted that one of the main characteristics of this 'method' was that the learner is first exposed to the bigger picture in the form of models. Based on needs, the focus then shifts to a specific aspect of language. Fundamental to this 'method', according to Marcel, is the fact that it follows clear stages, with learners being provided with examples, practice and experience in a context where "comprehension of meaning precedes the acquisition of the linguistic elements used in its communication" (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 171). The 'good method' proposed by Marcel involved a combination of this 'analytic' method with a 'synthetic method', one that focuses on rules through which the learner is led to the object of study.

Interestingly, Breen (1987a & b) largely ignored the notional and modal aspects of the notional-functional syllabus design proposal, noting that "Van Ek (1975) - a central contributor to the development of the Functional syllabus - abandons notional subdivision in favour of a framework of pre-selected topics or themes which 'carry' a Functional syllabus" (Breen, 1987a, p.90).

With the exception of Abbs, Ayton and Freebairn (1975a) and Jones (1977), in whose works content specification for general English language courses is functionally specified, Breen (1987a, p. 90) associates functional specification with 'Special Purpose' (LSP) contexts and, in particular, with occupational or academic contexts and goes on to argue (Breen, 1987b, p. 165) that "the earlier functionalist orientation of ESP has more recently evolved into a strong concern for the development of tasks which are appropriate to the learning and target needs of specific groups- such as students in diverse academic disciplines and learners of particular technical and vocational areas of knowledge and skill".

In common with Breen, Nunan (1988) has distinguished between what he refers to as 'product oriented' syllabuses (focusing on the knowledge and skills learners are expected to develop) and 'process oriented' syllabuses (focusing on learning experiences). Under the heading of the former (product oriented), he includes *structural (formal), situational, lexical* and *notion-functional* syllabuses. Under the heading of the latter (process oriented), he includes *task-based, procedural, proportional, content-based* and *negotiated* (the last of these being subject to reclassification depending on the nature of the negotiation). Similarly, White (1988) has distinguished between what he refers to as 'Type A' syllabuses (focusing on what is to be learned and associated by him with pre-packaging of language content into small discrete units and evaluation of outcomes in terms of mastery of the language) and 'Type B' syllabuses (focusing on how the language is learned and integrated with learners' experiences and being seen by him as emerging out of negotiation with learners). It should be noted that White does not attempt to make a clear distinction between syllabus and methodology. Indeed, he observes that whereas Type A syllabuses have a strong focus on 'what' language is to be taught, Type B syllabuses have a strong focus on 'how' the language will

be learnt. This highlights some important issues about the use of 'curriculum', 'syllabus', 'methodology' and 'materials' in the context of the teaching and learning of languages, issues that have never, I believe, been adequately addressed. Indeed, it is no doubt precisely because these issues have not been adequately addressed that the New Zealand Ministry of Education has, in the language curriculum documents it has produced over the past twenty years, avoided using the word 'syllabus' altogether, preferring to refer to any form of linguistic specification as a 'suggestion'. Indeed, a curriculum document produced in 2009 (Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2009) does not even include linguistic indicators in the form of suggestions.

Olshtain (1989) divides syllabuses into five types: *content-based* (e.g. structural and notional-functional); *process-based* (e.g. task-based); *product-based*; *context-based* and *learner-based* (involving ongoing negotiation with learners - see, for example, Nunan's (1989) references the 'collaborative approach' to syllabus design).² Her discussion of the last two is problematic. 'Product-based' syllabuses are said to "describe the end product, or the outcome of the course in greater detail than any other elements" and to be "compatible with a behaviouristic approach to learning" and "potentially compatible with other approaches whenever there is a need to define outcomes" (p. 36) - which suggests that this is a higher-order category that can, depending on how outcomes are defined, subsume other categories. 'Context-based syllabuses', which 'might' give 'emphasis and centrality' to "the context within which learning is going to take place" (p. 137) (and which, she asserts do not yet - in 1989 - exist) are nevertheless difficult to distinguish from specific purposes syllabuses, especially in the light of the example given, that is, "contexts where the language serves as a vehicle for religious or social goals" (p. 137) and the statement that while a syllabus of this type might "[look] .

² Although 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' are often used to refer to the level (e.g. clause/ sentence versus textual structure) that represents the starting point of syllabus classification, she refers later (Olshtain, 1989, p. 138) to these as representing a 'bottom-up' approach as opposed to a 'top-down' one, "where policy decisions are made by a higher level authority", at the same time as noting that "any type of syllabus can be planned in a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' decision-making process", something that suggests that the learner-based category may (like the 'product-based one - see discussion later in this chapter) be representative of a different order of generality from some of the other categories.

. . like a product- or process-based syllabus, its real hidden or implicit focus is on needs dictated by the context" (p. 137).

Irrespective of the precise nature of the categorization employed, there are two things about which many of those involved in the area would be likely to agree. The first is that there is a major difference between syllabus types in terms of whether their focus is on language itself, however categorized and organized (e.g. structural syllabuses), on something other than language (e.g. task-based syllabuses), or on some combination of the two (e.g. proportional syllabuses). The second is that the ultimate goal of language learning is, in most cases (one possible exception being language learning whose primary function is increased cultural and/or social awareness), the ability to use the target language to communicate.

It is not my primary aim here to argue in favour of one syllabus type rather than another or one type of classification of syllabus types rather than another (since to do so would require much more evidence than is currently available of the differential impact on learners of exposure to different syllabus design types in different instructional contexts). Rather, it is to explore the extent to which various syllabus design proposals have impacted, either directly or indirectly (through the mediation of textbooks), on teachers of English working in tertiary educational contexts who are not constrained by national curricula. It is, nevertheless, relevant to note that, as Brumfit (1980) has observed, we are generally teaching not a limited set of behaviours (as in the case of some ESP courses) but a generative system (p.2) and, therefore, although syllabuses will incorporate "a range of items which will not fit neatly into the system" (p.6), it is nevertheless important that material should be presented in a way that takes the importance of systematization into account (p.3).

Having explored the range of definitions and approaches to what constitutes a syllabus in this section, the following section considers the socio-political and intellectual influences that have shaped these approaches to syllabuses.

2.3 Setting the context

Since the early decades of the 20th century, there have been a number of major changes and developments in ways of thinking about and analysing human behaviour, including human learning, culture, communication and social organization (see 2.3.1 below). Many of these changes and developments, which have impacted on education generally as well as on languages education, were brought about by events surrounding World Wars I and II and have come to be associated with a range of phenomena collectively referred to as ‘globalisation’ (see 2.3.2 below).

2.3.1 Behaviourism, structuralism and beyond: Impact on language curriculum design

The Enlightenment was characterized by a belief in scientific rationality. This belief was still very much in evidence at the beginning of the 20th century. In the first half of that century and into the beginning of the second half, the approach to language and other human artefacts was characterized by a search for general rules and laws. This was the heyday of behaviourism within psychology, which sought to describe thoughts and feelings as well as actions scientifically without reference to mental states (see, for example, Skinner, 1968: Watson, 1913). It was also the heyday of structuralism within linguistics, which treated human languages as formal systems in which meaning is mediated by contrasts within the system (see *Cours de linguistique générale* (Saussure, 1916)). In Skinner’s (1957) account of verbal behaviour (a) each act of speaking is treated as an outcome of the speaker’s context and history, and (b) conditioning is considered to be a fundamental environmental factor in all learning, including language learning. During the early decades of the 20th century, behaviourism and linguistic structuralism began to represent a serious challenge to the thinking that underpinned what is generally known as ‘grammar translation’, an approach to the teaching of languages, particularly classical languages, that was widespread throughout Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries (and one that is still in evidence in many contexts today).

Many of the assumptions underlying grammar translation, which centres on the translation of written texts and the memorization of vocabulary and grammatical

rules, had begun to be seriously questioned in the late 1800s by linguists involved in what is often referred to as the ‘Reform Movement’ (including Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor, Felix Franke and Otto Jespersen). These linguists developed a method of teaching languages (variously referred to as the ‘direct’, ‘natural’, ‘new’ or ‘phonetic’ method) which prioritized oral interaction, avoided translation and the analysis of grammatical rules, and (generally) used the target language as the medium of instruction (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, pp. 187-209).

Events leading up to World War II, together with the war itself and its aftermath, led to further interrogation of the contemporary relevance of an approach to the teaching of languages (grammar translation) that was not oriented towards their day-to-day use and that was, in addition, underpinned by an élitist concept of culture as cultivation (improvement/superiority). This came to be associated with colonial and expansionist agendas (NeSmith, 2012, p. 35), and, in particular, with the increase in nationalistic propaganda that had preceded the outbreak of war (Valax, 2011, pp. 15-16).³ It was, however, behaviourism that provided a theoretical rationale for the contestation of grammar translation and underpinned the development of the ‘audio-lingual’ method, a method of teaching languages which grew out of audio-lingual habit theory and focuses on grammar drills (aiming “to take sentence patterns from structural linguistic analyses and drill them into the students through pattern practice” (Hubbard, 1994)). And it was linguistic structuralism that underpinned the development of the ‘structural syllabus’ (a syllabus in which language structures are central) that came to be particularly associated with the audio-lingual method.

In the middle of the 20th century, behaviourism and structuralism themselves began to be challenged. In the late 1950s, Chomsky (1959), in a review of Skinner’s *Verbal Behavior*, launched a major attack on behaviourist approaches to first language acquisition, arguing that language acquisition involves mental operations on language input rather than the simple copying of input. This, combined with the *critical period hypothesis* (proposed by Penfield and Roberts (1959) and elaborated by Lenneberg (1967)), according to which the capacity to

³ This concept of culture (or ‘high culture’) was *very different from the* anthropologically-based approaches that began to emerge in the mid-20th century (see, for example, Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

acquire languages decreased with age, had an immediate impact on the conceptualization of first language acquisition. It did not have an immediate impact on approaches to tutored language learning. Nevertheless, it did eventually have an impact, especially when supplemented by research that suggested that there might be a natural order of acquisition in the case of second languages irrespective of teaching sequence. Thus, confidence in audio-lingual habit theory was gradually undermined and cognitive code-learning theory, based on a combination of gestalt psychology and transformational linguistics and emphasising the role of hypothesis-formation in the generation of rules (rather than memorization and repetition), began to have an impact in some language teaching circles (Chastain & Woerdehoff, 1968). Even so, because Chomsky's account of first language acquisition remained rooted in structuralism, it did not initially undermine confidence in the concept of a wholly structural syllabus. There were, however, other forces at work, forces that were eventually to undermine that confidence.

Within linguistics, dissatisfaction with the capacity of both interpretive and generative semantics⁴ to adequately accommodate some aspects of meaning began to surface, as did unease concerning Chomsky's (1965) idealized notion of 'linguistic competence' (which made no reference to language in use). Influenced in a general sense by the development of post-structural thinking (see, for example, Derrida, 1974) but, more specifically, by the thinking of philosophers such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969; 1975) in the area of speech act theory and Firth (1930; 1937)⁵ in the field of ethnography, an increasing volume of research on sociolinguistics, pragmatics and the wider field of discourse analysis began to appear and to have an impact on the teaching and learning of additional languages. Also increasingly influential were Vygotsky's (1962; 1978) social cognition learning model (which emphasizes the importance of culture, group

⁴ Underpinning interpretive semantics was the assumption that syntax and semantics were largely autonomous, with the well-formed sentences paired with syntactic structures that were generated by syntactic rules being interpreted according to the rules of a separate semantic theory (see, for example, Jackendoff, 1972). Underpinning generative semantics was the belief that deep structures were the sole input into semantic interpretation, that is, that interpretations were generated by the grammar as deep structures and were then transformed into sentences (see, for example, Lakoff (1971) and Postal (1972)).

⁵ Firth made an important distinction between idealized rules of social behaviour (social structure) and the ways in which societies actually behaved (social organization).

learning, problem-solving and ‘scaffolding’) and Freire’s (1970) work on learner-centred pedagogies.

All of these developments began to impact on language teaching. Initially, that impact was felt most strongly in the area of methodology, particularly in the development in France of an ‘audio-visual’ method, which, although still strongly influenced by behaviourism, was also influenced by the structuro-global theorizing of Petar Guberina, which took account of situation, emotional meaning, non-verbal aspects of communication, interactional factors, and participants’ state of mind (Puren, 1988, p. 34). The development of audio-visual methodology also had an impact in the area of syllabus design. Audio-visual language courses were generally organized in terms of situations, but with both vocabulary and syntax also playing an important role, particularly in the case of audio-visual courses that were influenced by *Le Français Fondamental* (see Gougenheim, 1958 and Gougenheim et. al., 1956; 1964), the aim of which was to help secure the spread of French by specifying a basic vocabulary and grammar for the French language based on a combination of frequency of occurrence and perceived usefulness.⁶ This move towards having situations play a role in the organisation of course content was not confined to France. Attempts were also made in Britain and Australia to specify the content of language courses partly in terms of topics and/or situations (see, for example, *Topic English* by Harrison, Morgan and Percil (1974)) or a combination of topics/ situations and structures (see, for example, the Australian *Situational English* course produced by the Commonwealth Office of Education (1967)). However, some of the difficulties associated with approaches such as these were already being acknowledged in the 1960s (see, for example, Alexander, 1967a, xvii).

By the 1970s, the structural syllabus design concept was subject to increasing challenge. At a symposium on languages in adult education organised by the Eurocentres foundation at Rüsclikon in Switzerland in 1971, a small working group (including Jan van Ek, René Richterich, John Trim and David Wilkins) was

⁶ The first audio-visual course, *Voix et images de France*, was launched in 1961 at the first intergovernmental symposium (located in Paris) held under the auspices of the European Council for Cultural Co-operation.

set up to examine the feasibility of a unit-credit system for adult language learning. At meetings of that working group, John Trim drew attention to the possible relevance of speech act function types. This was taken up by David Wilkins (1973) in an article on the linguistic and situational content of the common core unit/credit system. This article was followed by a highly influential book in which Wilkins proposed that second language syllabuses should be designed with particular reference to what he referred to as ‘notions’ (including structurally encoded meanings), ‘functions’ and ‘modal meanings’ (Wilkins, 1976). At around the same time, a very different proposal concerning the organization of the content of language courses, referred to as ‘the procedural syllabus’, was formulated by Prabhu (initially referred to in an article by Dykstra and Nunes (1973)). That proposal was influenced by an emerging focus within learning theory on Vygotsky’s (1962; 1978) social cognition learning model and Freire’s (1970) arguments in favour of learner-centred pedagogy, both of which had already had a significant impact on the teaching of English (mainly as a first language) in schools, partly as a result of an Anglo-American seminar held at Dartmouth College in 1966 (see Dixon, 1967) which had emphasized the importance to language learning of the experience of *using* language and which had provided considerable support for those process-centred approaches to the teaching of writing that were beginning to emerge at that time (Lin, 2010, pp. 28-35). Prabhu’s proposal was to organize syllabuses in terms of tasks which were conceptually graded, with no attempt to plan the linguistic content of lessons in advance and with teaching procedures that concentrated primarily on form being discouraged. This proposal can be seen to have had a direct bearing on a raft of later proposals relating to task-based learning in which tasks form the ‘core unit of planning’ (see, for example, Richards & Rogers, 2001).

The focus on language universals that characterized the work of Chomsky remained, however, very much in evidence within linguistics and it was this focus, combined with an orientation towards coherence and cohesion, that was reflected in an approach to the design of syllabuses for additional languages proposed by Crombie (1985a) and referred to as the ‘relational syllabus’. Crombie (1985a) argued that semantic relations (intra-propositional and inter-

propositional), because they are small in number and cross-linguistic but are encoded/ realized in languages in a number of different ways, could “provide . . . a conceptual framework for the syllabus, into which we [could] insert, in a systematic way, those constructions and lexical items which we wish[ed] to introduce at various stages”.

Meanwhile, a growth in corpus-based research was beginning to draw attention to the importance of memory-based lexical chunking. In the mid-1970s, Bolinger (1975) had argued that the rule-governed basis of language may have been over-emphasized and that instances of language may be much more firmly based on lexical elements than was sometimes supposed, an argument supported by Sinclair (1991) who observed that, in practice, the immense combinatorial possibilities of language are often subordinated to a preference for repeated co-occurrences of lexical items/ chunks. On this basis, proposals relating to what is referred to as a ‘lexical syllabus’ began to emerge (see, for example, Sinclair and Renouf (1988) and Willis (1990)).

With so many different aspects of research on learning and language beginning to impact on second language teaching, and with so many differently oriented syllabus design proposals emerging, some applied linguists began to argue in favour of a compromise position that involved an eclectic or hybrid approach. Thus, for example, Brumfit (1980) proposed a ‘core and spiral syllabus’ in which the grammatical system constituted the core, with notions, functions and situations spiralling around it, and Yalden (1983) proposed a ‘proportional syllabus’ in which an initial ‘structural phase’ (in which formal and ideational meaning are the focus of attention) is followed by a number of ‘communicative phases’ (focusing on functional, discoursal and rhetorical components) and a final ‘specialized phase’. There are even those who have argued in favour of abandoning the distinction between syllabus and methodology altogether. Thus, for example, Nunan (1989a, p. 1) claims not only that “with the development of communicative language teaching, the separation of syllabus design and methodology becomes increasingly problematical” but also that, within the context of a task-based approach, “if we see curriculum planning as an integrated set of processes . . .

then the argument over whether the design and development of tasks belongs to syllabus design or to methodology becomes unimportant”.

2.3.2 Globalisation and neo-liberalism: Impact on language curriculum design

Globalisation has been defined in a variety of ways (see, for example, Giddens (1990, p. 64) and Waters (1995, p. 3)) and there is considerable disagreement about when it began, with Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1992) arguing that it is a pre-modern phenomenon and Cox (1996) setting its beginnings in the early 1970s. What all do agree on, however, is the fact that it involves processes of international integration (associated with economic and cultural interdependence) and that these processes have been greatly facilitated since the second half of the 20th century by (a) advances in transportation systems and telecommunications, and (b) the formation, following World War II, of a range of international organisations, such as the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). What they also agree on is the fact that globalisation has become closely associated with neoliberalism⁷, an ideology which, whatever precise definition or version is in focus, involves policies that encourage free trade, open markets and minimum state intervention in competitive entrepreneurial activity. What is also not in dispute is the fact that globalisation, in its most recent manifestation (including the outsourcing of production and services and serial migration), has led to (a) a massive expansion in the use of a few languages internationally (most notably English), with a consequent burgeoning of interest in the teaching of these languages to learners of all ages in a wide variety of contexts and settings⁸, and (b) substantial challenge to the relevance of traditional distinctions between ‘first language’ and ‘second language’ and between ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ (Graddol, 2006). It has also led to considerable tension between local educational needs and interests (Canagarajah, 1999; 2004) and the type of centralisation that is evidenced in the phenomenon of ‘mass curricula’ (Ramirez & Boli, 1987), that is,

⁷ Classical neoliberalism was developed in Austria between the world wars in response to what was seen as the erosion of personal liberties by both socialist and fascist governments.

⁸ As Harris, Leung and Rampton (2001, p. 39) note (with particular reference to England) “there are a number of significant ways in which educational policy moved in step with the economic dimensions of globalisation, dancing to the neo-liberal market philosophy that has been so influential in global ‘ideoscapes’ from the 1980s onwards”.

curricula which are “directly defined and prescribed through the influence of international organizations [and]. . . through the models provided by dominant nation-states” (Benavot, et. al., 1991, p. 97).

Maurais and Morris (2003) have observed that many countries now perceive English to be an essential educational requirement for everybody rather than a coveted achievement for a few. In such a context, a context in which there is a “shift towards the perception of language as a technical skill and marketable commodity” (Heller, 2002, p. 47), language learners increasingly tend to “equate expected outcomes with financial input” and “teaching and learning are . . . often ‘chunked’ into smaller and smaller packages that are assessed independently of one another” (Crombie, 2008, p. 58)

Reference was made earlier to a symposium on languages in adult education organised by the Eurocentres foundation in Switzerland in 1971 where those attending were tasked with exploring the feasibility of a unit-credit system for adult language learning, that is, a system that would enable adult learners to gain credit for studying units of work with immediate practical application (Morrow, 2004, p. 5). In that context, reference was also made to the fact that David Wilkins framed his notional syllabus proposal in terms of the linguistic and situational content of the common core unit/credit system. What we see here is globalisation and developments in discourse analysis coming together in an approach to syllabus design that is potentially consistent with aspects of the neoliberal agenda in that its functional orientation allows for a focus on what are perceived to be the immediate language needs of adults, particularly adult migrant workers, rather than on longer term language goals. This is essentially an approach that allows for a specific purposes orientation in the context of short courses with intended immediate practical outcomes. The primary emphasis here appears to be on what Widdowson (1983, pp. 17-18) refers to as language ‘training’ rather than language ‘education’:

The purpose of training is to impart a set of skills, which are, in effect, a repertoire of responses tagged with appropriate stimulus indicators, a set

of paired associations. A *linguistic* skill involves the linking of an abstract linguistic rule with its concrete expression: the relating of form and substance. . . . One can think of a *communicative* skill as involving a repertoire of linguistic forms tagged with appropriate situational or notional/functional indicators: the relating of form and situation. . . . Whereas . . . one might reasonably think of training as the imparting of *skills*, education is essentially a matter of developing *abilities*, understood as cognitive constructs which allow for the individual's adjustment to changing circumstances.

The appeal of the notional functional approach to syllabus design in a neoliberal educational context, one in which the emphasis is on market-driven educational provision, is immediately apparent. It becomes even more apparent when its history and subsequent development are taken into account.

World War II and its aftermath reinforced the need, a need felt particularly within Europe, for linguistic and cultural understanding and a measure of political and economic unity, something that was increasingly reinforced by the impact of globalisation in almost all spheres of human activity. On 5 May 1949, the *Treaty of London 1949*, which established the *Council of Europe*, was signed, the overall aim being to achieve “a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress” (*Treaty of London 1949*, Article 1). At the end of 1954, the member states signed the *European Cultural Convention* which was “designed to foster among the nationals of all members . . . the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the others and of the civilisation which is common to them all” (Council of Europe, 1954, *European Cultural Convention*, Preamble). In 1957, at the first intergovernmental conference on European co-operation in language teaching, a *Committee of Experts* was set up to plan the development of modern language teaching in Europe (Trim, 26 September 2001, p. 2). In December 1961, a *Council for Cultural Co-operation* (designed to replace the Committee of Cultural Experts that had been provided for by the Cultural Convention) was created, with four

committees in charge of education, higher education, culture, and cultural heritage. It was at the first intergovernmental symposium held under the auspices of this Council that France presented *Le Français Fondamental*⁹ (a specification of a basic vocabulary and grammar for the French language designed to facilitate the learning of the language) and the first audio-visual course for adult learners of French, *Voix et images de France* (Rivenc, Gauvenot, Boudst & Moger, 1966). This signalled the beginning of an attempt to counter what Trim (2005, p. 13) has referred to as a situation in which “language teachers [had become] quite out of touch with the up-to-date realities of the languages and cultures they were teaching and concentrated their attention on puristic formal correctness and the heritage of national literature”.

The next major development was the establishment of a *Major Project in Modern Languages (1963-1972)*, the establishment of which led to the introduction into European universities of applied linguistics as a recognised academic discipline and the creation of the *International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA)*. Within the context of that project, much attention was paid to the day-to-day language needs of adult migrant workers. This, in turn, led to a symposium on adult language education held in Switzerland in 1971 (referred to above) where the focus was on the development of a unit-credit system for language learning in adult education. In this context, the potential relevance of speech act theory to the specification of the content of language courses began to be explored, leading to the development of the ‘notional-functional syllabus’ (see above) and to attempts to develop specifications for language courses based on the notional-functional concept, such as *The threshold level* (van Ek, 1995) for English and *Un Niveau Seuil* (Coste, Courtillon, Ferenczi, Martins-Baltar & Papo, 1976) for French. These specifications were intended to relate to “the abilities that specific groups of

⁹ As Valax (2011, p. 22) observes: “It must not be forgotten, however, that in the 1970s *Le Français Fondamental* became the centre of a heated debate among academics, politicians and the public. On the political level, it was criticized by both the left and the right. The Communist party, for example, expressed the view that it promoted the teaching of a kind of *sous-français* (sub-French) which was regarded as an adequate substitute for genuine linguistic and cultural education in the case of immigrants. So far as some right wing commentators were concerned, it encouraged laziness and involved a form of linguistic degeneration which could lead to a type of pidgin French.”

learners, such as migrants, business people or tourists, needed in order to reach a communication ‘threshold’ in the foreign language” (Valax, 2011, pp. 25 - 26). A further project - *Project 4 for modern languages (1977-1981)* – attempted to apply “the principles developed by the unit-credit group . . . across the different sectors of general secondary, vocational and adult education, as well as in migrant education” (Trim, 26 September 2001, p. 4) and led to the development of further specifications, such as *Waystage* (van Ek & Trim, 1977).¹⁰

The most significant development emerging out of the overall focus on the perceived need for a unit-credit system occurred at a symposium held in 1991 on the initiative of the Swiss. The primary objective of that symposium, entitled *Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation, Certification*, was to relate language programmes and examinations in Europe by the means of a common framework of reference (North, 2005, p. 5). A working group (including John Trim (Project Director), Daniel Coste (CREDIF, France), Brian North (Eurocentres, Switzerland) and Joe Sheils (Council of Europe Secretariat) was tasked with the production of the *Framework*, the first draft appearing in 1995, the second in 1997, and the final version in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2001).¹¹

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) claims to provide readers with “all [they] need to describe [their] objectives, methods and products” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. xii), and, thus, to “overcome the barriers to communication . . . arising from . . . different educational systems” and to “facilitate . . . mobility through . . . mutual recognition of qualifications” (p. 1). It is, however, noted in the CEFR (2001, p. 1) itself that “[t]he taxonomic nature of

¹⁰This was followed by *Project 1 – Learning and teaching modern languages for communication (1981-1988)* – where the emphasis was on helping member states to implement earlier recommendations which involved, between 1984 and 1987, 36 international workshops (with 226 presenters and 1500 participants) whose focus was on what had come to be known as ‘the communicative approach’ (Valax, 2011, p. 27).

¹¹At the same time, the original versions of *Threshold Level* and *Waystage* were developed and extended (van Ek & Trim, 1990 and 1991) and a higher level specification, *Vantage Level* (van Ek & Trim, 2001) was released, with parallel versions being prepared for other languages, such as German and Greek. All of these had an impact on the way in which the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) was conceptualized, with *Waystage*, *Threshold* and *Vantage* corresponding to the first three of the CEFR’s six levels (A2, B1 and B2, respectively).

the Framework inevitably means trying to handle the great complexity of human language by breaking language competence down into separate components” which “confronts us with psychological and pedagogical problems of some depth”. Language in the CEFR is described in terms of three types of competences (general competences, communicative language competences and cultural competences). In this connection, it is relevant to note that Fairclough (1995, p. 239), in discussing the impact of Margaret Thatcher’s focus on an enterprise culture in the U.K. in the 1980s, observed “ a general shift towards seeing knowledge operationally, in terms of competence . . . and towards seeing education as training in skills”.

Critical to the CEFR is its positioning of language learners as social agents, that is, as “members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action” (p. 9), something that appears to be more consistent with a specific purposes language focus than a general educational one. This type of focus, which began with the *Major Project in Modern Languages (1963-1972)*, becomes even clearer when the CEFR’s approach to objectives setting is considered. It is noted in the CEFR (pp. 137 & 179) that objectives may be expressed *either* as “a specific constellation of activities, skills and competences” associated with tasks that “are normally focused within a given domain and considered as objectives to be achieved in relation to that domain” *or* as “a Common Reference Level (e.g. B1)”. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the authors are inclined to associate only the latter (general overarching (global) proficiency descriptors) with language education that is not intended to be domain-specific in orientation (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 131):

When charting the progress of students through the earlier stages of their general education, at a time when their future career needs cannot be foreseen, or indeed when an overall assessment has to be made of a learner’s language proficiency, it may be most helpful and practical to combine a number of . . . categories into a single summary characterization of language ability, as, for instance, in Table 1 presented in Chapter 3.

This reinforces the fact that the CEFR, and the notional-functional syllabus design concept that is particularly associated with various stages of its development, were designed largely with adults with immediate domain-specific language needs in mind. After all, as North (2007, p. 658) has indicated, most of the descriptive scales in the CEFR are likely to prove unsuitable in the case of school-based language education because they so often centre on specifics associated with adult interactions. This is one of the reasons why a further project relating to the languages of school-based education was launched in 2005). The fact remains, however, that attempts have been made, most notably in France, to apply the CEFR in the context of school-based curricula (see discussion in Valax, 2011 pp. 263-266). Furthermore, the CEFR has had a major impact both within and beyond Europe (Valax, 2011, pp. 4 – 10), with many textbook publishers and examination providers claiming alignment with it, claims that some associate with attempts to survive in a competitive market place (McNamara, 21 October 2006; Papageorgiou, 20 October 2006). In spite of all of this, Little (Council of Europe, 2005b, p. 167), on the basis of a survey conducted by the Council of Europe in 2005, concluded that “knowledge and use of the CEFR [was] confined to a minority of specialists”. Furthermore, a survey of language teachers from France, the UK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia conducted later (Valax, 2011, pp. 84-163) revealed that (a) very few had read the CEFR, and (b) only a few more had anything other than a very vague idea of its content. Valax’s conclusion was that “there is little interest in, or enthusiasm for the CEFR among those frontline professionals who will ultimately determine whether it has any real impact on the teaching and learning of languages” (p. i). After all, as Westhoff (2007, p. 676) has observed, “the authors of the CEFR were not very explicit about its implication for classroom teaching”. In addition, the syllabus type underpinning the CEFR, with its many and varied components and its emphasis on specific contexts of situation, could be seen as one example of what Graddol (2007, p. 72) has described as a general tendency to sweep aside “wider frameworks and disciplinary knowledges” in favour of “more pragmatic and fragmentary approaches”, approaches which flourish in the context of a neoliberal educational philosophy. After all, as Krumm (2007, p. 668) has observed, a number of European countries now require migrants to take language tests related

to particular CEFR levels in order to obtain a residence permit or gain citizenship and “[t]here is good reason to doubt whether a test loaded with such heavy sanctions (e.g. losing the right of residence in a country) is a good basis for successful language learning” (p. 668).

It is not only the CEFR and the syllabus type particularly associated with it that might be seen as having the potential to reinforce the neoliberal educational agenda. This is also something that has been associated with a movement in language education towards a skills focus. As Crombie (2008, p. 61) observes:

Whereas we might in the past have offered a single integrated course in language over a whole academic year, we might now be required to offer several different courses in different semesters. We may even provide separate courses in reading, in writing, in listening and in speaking Indeed, in the course of dividing our subject up into chunks, we may even fail to ensure that the content of these chunks is related.

It is not only the notional functional approach to syllabus design that can be readily accommodated to the neoliberal agenda. This is true also of other approaches, including task-based approaches. Block (2002) observes that globalization creates favourable conditions for the wide dissemination of ways of conceptualizing complex phenomena (frames), such as the *Interaction Hypothesis* (Long, 1996; Gass, 1997) in which negotiation of meaning is central. This hypothesis underpins the task-based approach which is based on the belief that “communication can be broken down into individual units” (Block, 2002, p. 122), something which Block sees as being culturally specific, insufficiently complex, “inherently enterprise-like in nature” and consistent with “a more general technical-rational frame which [has] reduced human existence to the principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, controllability and standardization” (p. 132).

It is in this context that the responses of language teachers to proposals relating to the teaching and learning of additional languages need to be viewed. Canagarajh (2002, p. 140) notes that “from a pedagogical point of view, what teachers

practice in language classrooms rarely resembles any specific method as it is prescribed in manuals or materials”. The same is likely to be true in the case of the content of language courses (syllabuses), particularly when it is borne in mind that proposals relating to syllabus design may be centrally driven, culture-specific, and amenable to neoliberal appropriation. As Widdowson (2003, p. 15) observes: “There is no shortage of people recommending what language teachers should do . . . But they are in no position to recommend particular courses of action though they can, of course, point out possibilities it may be profitable to explore”.

The above section (2.3) explored the socio-political and intellectual influences that appeared to have moulded the key approaches to syllabus types.

2.4 Approaches to language syllabus design

Having discussed the political, social and economic contexts in which the key language syllabus design proposals occurred, this section will explore some of these proposals.

2.4.1 Structural syllabuses

In 1947, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended the development of approaches to language education that would facilitate mass education in developing countries. France was one of the countries that had a particular interest in this possible development as it wished to extend the use of French within and beyond the countries of the French Union (i.e. the French colonial empire). Supervised by Georges Gougenheim, a research team began to investigate the possibility of determining, on the basis of a corpus of oral texts and a series of surveys, what grammar and vocabulary were required as a minimum in order to communicate in French and the order in which they might be taught^{12,13}. On the basis of this research, France presented, at the first Intergovernmental Symposium held under the auspices of the Council for

¹² This research was conducted at the *Centre d'étude du français élémentaire* (located in the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* of Saint-Cloud) which was later renamed CREDIF (*Centre de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Diffusion du Français*).

¹³ For example, from a total of more than three hundred thousand words collected, a corpus of 1000 words was selected as being fundamental on the basis of frequency of occurrence. Added to this, on the basis of an availability criterion, were a further 1,500 words that, although they occurred less frequently, were considered important because they were related to things and activities (e.g. food and drink, furniture, health) of fundamental importance in daily living.

Cultural Co-operation (Council of Europe) in 1961, *Le Français Fondamental*, which, as stated above, is a specification of a basic vocabulary and grammar for the French language. Although this was the subject of heated debate at the time, it represented a significant stage in the development of a grammatico-lexical syllabus determined on the basis of transparent principles of selection. Although it includes vocabulary as a fundamental aspect of content, this syllabus type is often referred to simply as a 'grammatical syllabus'.

According to Krahnke (1987, p. 15), grammatical syllabuses are based on “a theory of language that assumes that the grammatical or structural aspects of language form are the most basic or useful”. In this type of syllabus, grammatical form is the key element and the list of what is to be taught is made up almost wholly of vocabulary and grammatical forms (e.g. syntactic structures and morphological variants). Yalden (1983) has observed that in structural syllabuses the structures included are isolated and abstracted from their discourse context, these isolated, abstracted structures being treated as discrete grammar points. In fact, however, although it is certainly true that many structural syllabuses focus almost exclusively on decontextualized forms, largely ignoring critical aspects of discourse construction and comprehension, there is nothing about a structural syllabus *per se* that stipulates that grammatical structures should not be presented in appropriate discourse contexts. It has also been claimed that structural syllabuses prioritise form over meaning and use (Wilkins, 1976, pp. 8 - 13). Once again, however, it is important to note that there is nothing about the structural syllabus design concept *per se* that requires a separation of structure and meaning/use or, indeed, the prioritization of form. As Crombie (1988, p. 286) has observed. “it could be . . . argued that structural syllabus design has always accorded an important place to the comparison and contrast of structures in terms of a range of different meaning potentials”. Thus, for example, in many structural syllabuses there is a direct relation between structure and structure-related meanings (e.g. simple present for definite plans for the future and present simple for habitual activities). Structure is, after all, a key component of meaning. Furthermore, as Lee (1977, p. 248) observed in an article published in the mid-1970s, it would seem perverse to regard “the main patterns of syntax without a

command of which no kind of learner will be able to understand much” as “*mere linguistic forms*” and to underestimate their importance in terms of course content. According to Nunan (1988), a positive aspect of the structural syllabus is that it is not culture specific and it is value-free so that teaching and learning can occur without a direct cultural influence. This is something that could be of considerable significance in a context in which English is taught largely for use as a transactional medium among users who have no particular interest in the cultural roots of the language. It remains the case, however, that structural syllabuses do not normally accommodate discourse context. Even so, there is no reason why they should not be fully contextualized. As Widdowson (1998, pp. 323-333) observes:

The linguistic skill-getting exercise of the traditional type did focus on meaning, but on that which is semantically encoded in form. It had a goal – the manifestation of code knowledge, and the outcome was evaluated in terms of code conformity. *And there was a relationship with the ‘real-world’ in that it was supposed that an internalization of such knowledge would provide an instrument for subsequent use. . . .* As Lado and Fries put it, the purpose of pattern practice was ‘to reduce to habit what rightfully belongs to habit in the new language, so that the mind and personality may be freed to dwell in their proper realm, that is on the meaning of the communication rather than the mechanics of grammar’ (Lado and Fries 1957). In other words, the end in view was communicative fluency. Of course, the word *habit* has unfortunate connotations these days, but it is important to note that pattern practice was preceded by presentation which was designed to demonstrate meaning, *so what practice made habitual was a knowledge of forms as semantic encodings. It was not a matter of teaching form rather than meaning (as it is commonly misrepresented as being) but of teaching meaning as encoded in form, on the assumption that this would provide the basic resource for communication* (emphasis added).

2.4.2 Situational/topic-based syllabuses

While France was focusing on the concept of lexico-grammatical syllabuses (associated with an audio-visual methodology that was rooted in the image/sound correlation fundamental to Guberina's structuro-global approach), Britain was in the process of developing situational/ topic-based syllabuses¹⁴ which were organized according to situations in which certain language is likely to be employed and in which lexical and grammatical aspects of the language were introduced in terms of their probability of occurrence in the context of particular topics and situations (Ur, 2000, p. 178). This development was related to the work of Firth (1930; 1937) in which what he referred to as 'speech events' and 'contexts of situation' play a major role. He argued that since a speech event is an expression of the language system from which it arises, we can arrive at some understanding of how language works only if we refer to sequences operating in contexts of situation which are typical, recurrent, and repeatedly observable. Thus, fundamental to the concept of the situational/ topic-based syllabus was the notion that "[l]anguage . . . is best learned and remembered when presented in contextual settings" (Johnson, 1989, p. 179). One of several problematic assumptions underlying syllabuses of this type is the assumption that the interaction between situations (e.g. at the post office/ bank) and language selection is largely deterministic; a second is the difficulty of deciding which situations should be prioritized in particular instances (Wilkins, 1976, pp. 83 & 84). Perhaps even more significant is the danger that the emphasis on an association between particular linguistic constructions and particular situations will impact on the importance of structural productivity. Furthermore, as Alexander (1976, p. xxvii) observed, it is, in the early stages, possible to use very few structural patterns, something that reduces the credibility/ authenticity of the situations and can lead, as Long and Crookes (1993, p. 20) have observed, to "the use of structures as the

¹⁴ In outlining what is referred to as 'the natural approach' to second language acquisition, Krashen and Terrell (1983) forward the hypothesis that adults, in acquiring a second language, follow a natural order of progression that needs to be discovered and reinforced. However, what is actually recommended for the classroom is a topic-based syllabus. Thus, "the third general principle of the Natural Approach is that the course syllabus consists of communicative goals" and "this means that the focus of each classroom activity is organized by topic" so that "a possible goal might be to learn to communicate about trips the students have taken or be able to order a meal in a restaurant" (p.20).

pre-eminent form of sequencing", effectively, therefore, to situationalized structural syllabuses. Finally, it is important to note that it is very difficult to distinguish clearly between situations and topics and to delineate topic boundaries, with "topics having an unfortunate tendency to merge into one another and subsume other topics" (Long & Crookes, 1993 p. 23).

2.4.3 Notional-functional syllabuses

Wilkins (1976, p. 1) argues that syllabuses "can be grouped into two conceptually distinct types . . . which could be labelled *synthetic* and *analytic*". He notes that in the case of the former (synthetic), "the different parts of a language are taught separately and step-by-step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up", the task of the learner being "to re-synthesize the language that has been broken down" so that "[i]t is only in the final stages of learning that the global language is re-established in all its structural diversity", whereas in the case of the latter (analytic), "there is no attempt at this careful linguistic control" and "[c]omponents of the language are not seen as building blocks which have to be progressively accumulated". According to Wilkins, the 'notional' or 'notional/functional' syllabus which he proposes (as an example of a synthetic syllabus whose categorization is intended to be semantically rather than syntactically-oriented) "takes the desired communicative capacity as the starting point" (p. 18). Its primary focus is on 'notions', 'functions' and modal meanings, with "no attempt . . . to account for the lexical content of learning [which] is probably better approached in terms of subject-matter and situation" (p. 21).

Notional meanings are defined (Wilkins, 1976) as "what has variously been called 'ideational', 'cognitive' or 'propositional' meaning" . . . [and] "can be expressed through grammatical systems in different languages" (p. 21). They include semantico-grammatical categories (e.g. time; duration; time relations; frequency; sequence; quantity; numerals and operations; dimension; location; motion; predication and attribution; time; place; and person). *Modal sentences* are defined as ones in which "the truth of the predication is subject to some kind of contingency or modification" (p. 83). Modal meanings include probability; possibility; affirmation; negation; conviction; conjecture; intention; and

obligation. *Functions* (illocutionary forces) are defined as “what we *do* through language” (p. 41) or “what the speaker intends to achieve” (p. 43) and include approval and disapproval; prediction; inducement; compulsion; suggestion; agreement and disagreement; concession; reason; and greetings.

A number of issues have been raised in connection with the division of syllabuses into two types (synthetic and analytic) and the nature of the notional syllabus itself and the claims that have been made for it. Thus, for example, with particular reference to the first of these (i.e. the synthetic versus analytic distinction), Widdowson (1979, p. 247) has made the following point:

Notional syllabuses are represented by their proponents as an alternative to, and an improvement on, structural syllabuses. . . . The two types of syllabus differ most obviously in the manner in which the linguistic content is defined. In the structural syllabus it is defined in formal terms, as lexical items and grammatical patterns manifesting the system of English. In the notional syllabus, language content is defined in functional terms, as notions which are realized by formal items. *In both cases, the essential design is an inventory of language units in isolation and abstraction. In the structural syllabus, the inventory is ordered with reference to grading criteria. In the notional syllabus it is not* (emphasis added).

With reference to the nature of the syllabus itself, Crombie (1988, pp. 284 & 285) has made the following observations:

The term ‘function’ . . . refers to illocutionary force in the widest sense, and illocutionary force is context dependent. . . . Almost any utterance can have almost any illocutionary force depending on the context in which it is used. . . . It is precisely because this is the case that a list of function labels (e.g. ‘suggestion’, ‘threat’, ‘warning’ ‘insult’, ‘compliment etc.) can be of little use to a course writer.

Basically, a list of notions is a list of meanings which may be associated with particular grammatical constructions. . . . [A] notional syllabus differs

from a structural syllabus only in terms of (a) internal organization, (b) the type of labelling used for the learning units, and (c) the absence of grading criteria.

Thus, functions, because they can co-occur and can generally be realized/encoded in a vast range of different ways, would appear to have little to offer a syllabus designer who is concerned to move beyond stereotypical or formulaic interaction types (an exception to this, that is, inter-propositional functions, is discussed below within the context of the relational syllabus). In addition, notions, because they are primarily concerned with meanings that can be expressed grammatically, have little to offer that is new except for a different way of labelling and organizing syllabus units, one that, as in the case of functional specification, is more consistent with meeting the needs of adult language learners who have immediate needs that can be met (in part at least) through formulaic or semi-formulaic language training (see above). However, as Basturkmen (2003, p. 57) observes with particular reference to what she refers to as ‘narrow angled ESP [English for specific/ specifiable purposes] courses’:

However specific we endeavour to make an ESP course, it is always a matter of compromise, and at least some of the content is bound to be more relevant to the communicative needs of some individuals more than others. . . . If . . . course content comprises largely surface-level linguistic items, such as expressions for language functions X or Y, and if the students do not in fact later need to do X or Y, the . . . course content is of dubious value.¹⁵

With reference to what she refers to as ‘wide-angled’ courses that focus on the analysis of common needs, Basturkmen (2003) observes that “[o]ne danger . . . is that . . . no actual needs are addressed” (p. 57), and, finally, with reference to what she refers to as ‘wide-angled’ courses that focus on features of language use in a particular variety of English, she notes that “there is a need for some rationale for . . . focus[ing] learners’ attention on some rather than other language items” (p.

¹⁵ She adds that “one further difficulty . . . concerns the amount of research and preparation required for designing highly specific ESP courses” (Basturkmen, 2003, p. 57).

61), that rationale generally relating to frequency of occurrence. Even so, the fact that some items are less frequent does not mean that they are unnecessary. Furthermore, given the relevance of needs analysis in the context of notional/functional syllabus design, it is worth bearing in mind that Benesch (1996) has pointed out the extent to which needs analysis is affected by ideology and has provided some very persuasive examples of the impact of this in the context of academic purposes courses.

There are some further points that should be made here in connection with Wilkins' presentation of the notional-functional syllabus design concept. He makes a distinction between what he refers to as 'synthetic' syllabuses (made up of ordered, pre-selected units that are mastered incrementally before being re-synthesized) and 'analytic' syllabuses (made up of a series of segments that are selected largely on the basis of meaning), claiming that notion-functional syllabuses belong in the latter category. However, he acknowledges in places that this distinction is a matter of *degree* rather than *type* (observe the inclusion of the word 'more' in the following extract): "[this] approach is therefore in contrast with those approaches that rely more on his [sic] capacity to synthesize" (Wilkins, 1976, p. 14). He also acknowledges that a problem associated with what he refers to as 'analytic syllabuses' is "finding a way to express what it is that people do with language, so that the unavoidable process of limitation and selection can take place" (op. cit.). In practice, degree of structural complexity is likely to be one of the factors that is taken into consideration in the process of limitation and selection. In fact, it seems disingenuous to argue otherwise. If, however, such considerations are to be entirely absent, then Breen's (1987a, p. 89) observation that "the Functional syllabus follows similar principles of selection and subdivision to those of a comprehensive phrasebook" would appear to be unavoidable.

2.4.4 Core and spiral syllabuses

In response to the increasing diversity and complexity of syllabus design proposals, Brumfit (1980) proposed what, at first sight, appears to be a simple and straightforward solution - that the grammatical system should be at the core of the

language syllabus, with all other 'essential material' being related to it so that "notional, functional and situational specifications [could] be conceived of as a spiral round a basically grammatical core" rather than being "treated as if they can be taught discretely" (p.5). Thus, while first units might be primarily functional and later ones primarily notional, this would not "prevent the basic progression through the economical, generative grammatical core" (op. cit.). Such an approach would, he argued, address the issue that "[we] are not teaching a limited set of behaviours, but a capacity to produce those behaviours" (p. 2) and accommodate the fact that "everything we know about human learning suggests that it is crucially dependent on our ability . . . to systematize" (p. 3).

One thing that is worth noting here is that Brumfit's suggestion that initial units might be functionally oriented is consistent with Skehan's (1996; 1998) observations about developments in cognitive psychology that point to the existence of a dual processing system in which both a generative system and a memory-based one interact, the suggestion here appearing to be that initial reliance on a memory-based system (signalled by functional orientation) can be extended later to include the generative system. Although Skehan (1998) generally refers to a 'memory-based system', he sometimes uses the term 'lexically-based system' as if the two are interchangeable. Thus, for example, he refers to "stitching together language chunks" (p. 3) to cope with real-time language processing, later observing that this "means developing effective modes of coexistence between form- and lexis-based systems" (p. 5). In fact, however, chunking, though no doubt memory-based and meaning-centred, need not necessarily be lexically-based and structured memorized chunks may sometimes provide an important source of input to the rule-based system.

Also of interest is Brumfit's recognition of the fact that functions, being largely dependent on the interaction between language and context, cannot realistically constitute the core of a language programme that aims to do more than "enable students to produce appropriate responses in an extremely limited code" (p. 8: Note), something that he associates with certain types of specific purposes courses.

2.4.5 Relational syllabuses

The relational syllabus design concept was introduced in the mid-1980s by Crombie (1985a & b) and involves a combination of a top-down and bottom-up approach to syllabus specification, its starting point being universal cognitive processes (e.g. comparison/ contrast and logical sequence) and intra-propositional (e.g. Agent-Action) and inter-propositional relations (e.g. Chronological Sequence)¹⁶ and the signalling and encoding of these relations (which has a major impact on grammatical and lexical selection and, in doing so, provides an essential link between discourse coherence and textual cohesion).

Crombie (following Fillmore, 2005, p.17) discusses relations in propositional terms, a proposition being an abstraction made up of *a semantic predicator* (an action, state or process) and *one or more arguments* that relate to it. Although propositions do not themselves include mood, modality or temporal perspective, these are added when propositions are encoded in languages. Thus, for example, in the English-encoded proposition *John kicked the door*, the semantic predicator is represented as 'kicked' and the arguments as 'John' and 'the door'. Semantic predicators are often linguistically encoded as verbs or verb groups and arguments are often encoded as nouns or noun group but this is by no means always the case. As Whaanga (2005, p.17) indicates (with reference to Crombie, 1985a & b), in the English-encoded proposition *John is in the cupboard*, what is predicated of John is not 'isness' but 'inness': "the encoded predicator is 'is in' (or, simply 'in') and the arguments are 'John' and 'cupboard'".¹⁷ The variety of ways in which a single proposition may be encoded in a single language, and the fact that semantic predicators cannot be directly associated with verbs, or arguments with nouns, is indicated in the following sentences, in which the predicator is variously encoded as 'flirts', 'is flirtations' and 'is a flirt': *John flirts; John is flirtatious; John is a flirt*. Two further examples of different ways of encoding the same proposition grammatically are *John watered the roses* and *John put water on the roses*, in

¹⁶ These relations are binary in nature ('binary values') and finite in number and often underpin unitary values. Thus. For example, the inter-propositional relation of Condition-Consequence underpins the unitary value (function) warning so that the two may co-occur: *If you do that again I'll punish you*.

¹⁷ The verb 'is' is, in effect, simply a place-holder that can carry tense, some languages, such as, for example, Māori, having no equivalent of the English verb 'to be'.

only the second of which is the fact that there are three arguments (John', ' water' and 'roses') immediately evident.

All relations are binary in nature (made up of two parts). *Intra-propositional relations* operate inside single propositions, relating the semantic predicator to one or more arguments. In the account by Crombie (1985b), there are three main types of semantic predicator: *dynamic*, *process* and *stative*¹⁸ and nineteen types of argument (each of which relates to a particular semantic predicator type): *agent*, *instrument*, *force*, *patient*, *assignee*, *material*, *result*, *mutant*, *durant*, *experiencer*, *appertainant*, *object*, *source*, *goal*, *range*, *referee*, *referent*, *quantant* and *abaxiant* (see Crombie, 1985b for further detail). Thus, for example, an *agent* is defined as a sentient entity involved in carrying out an activity, an *instrument* as an entity by means of which an activity is carried out and a *patient* as an entity or abstraction involved non-causally in an activity: *John* (Agent) smashed *the lock* (Patient) *with a hammer* (Instrument). Each of these arguments is related to the semantic predicator (which is a general activity predicator), so the intra-propositional relations involved are: *Agent-Activity*; *Patient-Activity* and *Instrument-Activity*. Although the relations are always binary, a single label (the type of argument involved) is often used as a shorthand way of referring to these intra-propositional relations: *Agent*; *Patient*; *Instrument*.

Inter-propositional relations operate between or among propositions, relating them to one another¹⁹. They may be *associative* (involving comparison or contrast), *logico-deductive* (involving cause and effect) or *temporo-contigual* (involving relationships in time and space). The *associative relations* include *Simple Contrast*; *Comparative Similarity*; *Statement-Affirmation*; *Statement-Denial*; *Denial-Correction*; *Concession-Contraexpectation*; *Supplementary*

¹⁸ States and processes may be material (e.g. It is broken; It became sour) or experiential (e.g. He feels happy; He fell sick). Dynamic predicators may involve general, momentary or mental activity or transitional events or be factitive (i.e. bringing something into being).

¹⁹ Examples of each of these follow: *Alan* (agent) broke *the window* (patient) *with a hammer* (instrument); *Typhus* (force) killed the man; He awarded a goal to *the team* (assignee); She makes *puppets* (result) from *gloves* (material); *The butter* (mutant) melted; *The toy* (durant) is broken; *He* (experiencer) heard *the music* (appertainant); *The book* (object) is in the drawer; It was passed from *Mary* (source) to *John* (goal); It rolled down *the hill* (range); It (referent) concerns him (referee); It costs *a dollar* (quantant). Definitions of these are provided by Whaanga (2005, pp. 45 - 50).

Alternation; Contrastive Alternation; Paraphrase and Amplification). The *logico-deductive* relations include *Condition-Consequence; Means-Purpose; Reason-Result; Means-Result* and *Grounds-Conclusion*). The *temporo-contigial* relations include *Chronological Sequence; Temporal Overlap* and *Bonding*. For examples and definitions of each of these, see Crombie. 1985a, pp. 17-32. The universal cognitive processes (operations) underlying these relations are *resemblance* (comparison and contrast), *contiguity* in time and space and *cause and effect*. In *A treatise of human nature* (published 1738) David Hume (Vol. 1, p. 19) refers to these cognitive processes as “the reason why . . . languages so nearly correspond to each other”.

Each relation may be signalled (signposted) and encoded in a range of different ways. Thus, for example, *Chronological Sequence* signalling includes *subordinators* (e.g. after, once, since, till, as soon as), *prepositions* (e.g. after, before, since), *conjuncts* (e.g. finally, for a start); *time adjuncts* (e.g. last night; after dinner; eventually) and, in the case of nominalized propositions, *verbs* (e.g. precede; follow). Some examples are: *He did his homework and then washed the car; After having done his homework, he washed the car; The sacrifice followed the reception*. Similarly, the *Reason-Result* relation may be signalled by *subordinators* (e.g. because; seeing (that)), *prepositions* (e.g. because of, due to; in view of), *conjuncts* (consequently, thus), *nouns* (cause, effect, reason) and *causative verbs* (cause, bring about) and the encoding of propositions linked by *Reason-Result* may take a wide variety of forms (e.g. *He left early because of the bad weather; He released the prisoner. the reason being that . . .; Relieved at their reaction, he rejoiced*).

The relational syllabus aims to take account of vocabulary, syntax and discourse features within the context of a cognitively-based framework that has universal cognitive processes and the semantic relations associated with them as its starting point. This is an approach which claims to take "adequate account of language as coherent discourse" (Crombie, 1985b, p. 1). The syllabus itself is made up of relational frames which combine semantic relations of various types and relational signals. Two examples are provided below:

Condition-Consequence + Reason-Result (if . . . then; because [subordination])

(e.g. If . . . then . . . because . . .)

Concession-Contraexpectation (Result)-Reason(Condition -Consequence)

(e.g. *Although . . . , . . . because if . . . , then . . .*)

Relational frames such as these are also combined with discourse organizational patterns (e.g. Problem-Solution) in a way that prefigures some subsequent developments in the area of genre-based writing syllabuses (see 2.3.7.2 below) as demonstrated below:

Problem (Concession- Contraexpectation (Reason- Result (Condition-Consequence (Means-Purpose)

<i>Concession</i>	The worst thing about having a dinner party is cleaning up the debris afterwards.	} <i>Problem</i>
<i>Contraexpectation</i>		
	However, you don't have to worry about this particular problem any longer.	} <i>Solution</i>
<i>Condition</i> <i>Consequence</i>		
	Just 'phone us at DIALAMAID and we'll send someone round (<i>Means</i>) to do it for you (<i>Purpose</i>)	

While conceptualizing syllabuses in terms of relational frames and relating these frames to possible realizations requires a major reorientation of ways of thinking about syllabus specification, Widdowson (1990, p. 136) has observed that this

approach usefully combines aspects of analytic and synthetic approaches in that it combines top-down and bottom-up (sentential level) processing.

2.4.6 Lexical syllabuses

It was noted earlier that proposals relating to lexical syllabuses were influenced by the fact that an expansion in corpus-based research had revealed the frequent co-occurrence of lexical items and lexical chunking in instances of language. Thus, for example, Hoey (2005, p. 1), within the context of a consideration of what he refers to as ‘lexical priming’ (an approach to language use that focuses on repetitive patterns of lexical chunking), argues that “lexis is complexly and systematically structured and . . . grammar is an outcome of this lexical structure”. There are, however, other important influences on the emergence of the concept of lexical syllabuses. One of these has been lexical-functional grammar, developed by Bresnan and Kaplan (Kaplan & Bresnan, 1982) in which the lexicon plays a central role, with lexical entries subcategorizing for both function and constituent structure. Within the context of lexical-functional grammar, subcategorization (a) is functionally rather than structurally motivated (e.g. *drink* is subcategorized to take an object, not a noun phrase), (b) determines which constituents can occur with a particular lexical item (e.g. *sleep* is subcategorized as intransitive), and (c) specifies the thematic role that a function is associated with (e.g. *drink* is associated with Subject-Agent and Object-Theme). Furthermore, lexical rules take a lexical item as input and return a lexical item with a new subcategorization as output, thus accounting for the systematic relationships among the different forms of the same basic lexical item (e.g. a lexical rule links the active and passive forms of verbs). An important underlying assumption of lexical-functional grammar is that the lexicon is central to grammar and, therefore, that the learning of grammar and vocabulary are closely related. Within this context, accurate information about sentence types can be derived on the basis of lexical information. Thus, for example, the causative/inchoative rule indicates that causative verbs in sentences like *He melted the butter* are related to inchoative verbs (involving change of state) in sentences like *The butter melted*. What this illustrates is the importance of taking full account of the role that lexis plays in relation to form.

The concept of a lexical syllabus was proposed by Sinclair and Renouf (1988), used within the context of a language course by Willis and Willis (1989), and further elaborated by Willis (1990). Willis (1990) notes that the lexical syllabus “is firmly based on real language”, “draws on a corpus of natural language” (p. 124) and “does not dictate what will be learned and in what order” but “offers the learner experience of a tiny but balanced corpus of natural language from which it is possible to make generalisations about the language as a whole” (xii). It is also noted by Willis that, for example, in writing Level 1 of the *Collins COBULD English Course*, the aim was “to provide the learner with exposure to language which would illustrate the meanings and patterns of 700 of the most frequent words of English, to highlight all of these words and to treat selected items in detail” (p. 74). The course material involved texts (unscripted and unrehearsed) recorded in a studio, largely by native speakers of English who were involved in carrying out tasks that would later be performed by learners in the classroom (p. 74). These texts were then concordanced by computer to determine whether they included adequate coverage of the 700 lexical items (p. 77). It is also noted by Willis that whereas “[i]n the past it has been very difficult for syllabus designers to offer systematic insights into the structure of discourse”, the work of Hoey (1983) building on Winter (1977) “suggested that a lexical approach might offer the most promising starting point” (p. 120). He goes on to illustrate how words such as ‘that’ can be used to introduce a situation or problem (*My brother’s problem was that . . .*) in the context of a *situation-problem-solution-evaluation* discourse structure and to provide a list of sentence introductions (e.g. *One possibility might be . . .*) that could be associated with *problem* or *solution* sections of texts. He notes that “[a] lexical approach to discourse structure affords us a way of identifying those language items which the writer uses to give shape to discourse” (p. 120). There is a problem here so far as the proposal regarding a lexical syllabus is concerned. The words in focus may, depending on the context in which they occur, signal certain macro-functions (discourse functions such as *problem*) – but they may not. Thus, although it is certainly the case that the occurrence of the word ‘problem’, when not negated, indicates problem identification, this does not necessarily indicate that a text segment is functioning *as a problem* within the discourse as a whole. Similarly, although the noun

‘possibility’, in combination with the modal auxiliary ‘might’, may sometimes function as an indicator of the occurrence of the discourse segment *solution*, it may not. It may, for example, simply signal the likely occurrence of the micro-function *suggestion*. What this indicates is that there are potential dangers associated with attempting to associate micro- and macro-functions primarily with lexis rather than with discourse context as a whole.

A further issue so far as proposals concerning a lexical syllabus are concerned is the fact that they have been presented in the context of a dismissal of what is referred to as a ‘methodological cycle’ of ‘presentation, practice and production’, a cycle that is dismissed on the grounds that “‘meaning implies choice’ whereas “the purpose of presentation and practice is to restrict choice” (Willis, 1990, p. 3). However, choice requires knowledge and understanding of the options available and the reality is that the choices available to language learners are inevitably limited. It seems, therefore, disingenuous to claim, as Willis does, that “[a] communicative methodology . . . demands that language learners use whatever language best achieves the desired outcome of the communicative activity” (p. 5).

As Widdowson (2003, p. 75) has observed, “corpus descriptions do not include discourse factors and, thus, although they do “yield a vast amount of fascinating facts, they are limited to one aspect of language use”. Although this observation raises a critical issue so far as the lexical syllabus as outlined by Sinclair and Renouf (1988), Willis and Willis (1989) and Willis (1990) is concerned, the ‘lexical approach’ (as opposed to ‘lexical syllabus’) as outlined by Lewis (1993) is somewhat less subject to criticism on the grounds of paying inadequate attention to discourse-related considerations. After all, Lewis maintains that “[a] central requirement . . . is that language material should be text and discourse, rather than sentence-based” (p. 112). Lewis includes within the definition of ‘lexis’ not only single words but stored word combinations. He argues that an important aspect of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases, including ‘institutionalized utterances’ such as, *That’ll do*²⁰ as unanalysed wholes and to use them as raw data underpinning the perception of

²⁰ Referred to by Keller (1979) as ‘gambits’, by Peters (1983) as ‘speech formulae’, by Pawley and Syder (1983) as ‘lexicalized stems’ and by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) as ‘lexical phrases’.

language patterns (Lewis, 1993, p. 95), the focus, therefore, being on seeing things “in larger, more holistic ways” (Lewis, 1997, p. 204). Within this context, the inclusion of sentence frames (e.g. *This is not as . . . as you think*) and heads (e.g. *Secondly,..*) means that some attention *is* paid to textual considerations. However, over-reliance on pre-digested chunks can be problematic in that it largely ignores the need to balance a memory-based system against a rule-based one (see Skehan, 1998).

2.4.7 Task-based syllabuses and procedural frameworks

2.4.7.1 Task-based syllabuses

Associated with a developing focus on communicative competencies²¹ and communicative language teaching²² has been a growing emphasis on tasks, including 'metacommunicative tasks', that is, tasks that focus on learning itself, as well as 'communicative tasks' (Breen, 1987b, p. 161).

Reference was made above to Prabhu's (1987) 'procedural syllabus', a syllabus that focuses on tasks graded in terms of conceptual difficulty, with no attempt

²¹ The notion of 'communicative competence' was initially forwarded in the work of Campbell and Wales (1970) with reference to the communicative difficulties that disturbed children can experience and in the work of Hymes (1971) with reference to language teaching and learning. The notion of 'communicative competence' was later extended to 'communicative competencies' (see, for example, Bachman & Palmer, 1996), a notion that is fundamental to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001). However, it is a notion that has become so all-embracing that Widdowson (1998, p. 331) has made the following observation:

Learners of a foreign language should be made aware of . . . cultural conditions on real communication. . . . But the explicit teaching of communicative abilities which measure up to those of the communities whose language they are learning is quite a different matter. . . . I believe that an attempt to do so is to set an impossible and pointless goal whose only outcome is likely to be frustration. . . . It is the business of pedagogy to decide on what can be feasibly and effectively taught . . . so as to activate a learning investment for future use. Talk of real world communication is all too often a distraction.

²² The notion of 'communicative language teaching' which emerged alongside the notion of communicative competence or communicative competencies has been understood in a variety of different ways at different times. Littlewood (1981, pp. 6 & 77-78) defined communicative language teaching as involving *skills* (manipulation of the language system, ability to relate form and communicative function, understanding of the social meanings of linguistic forms, and strategic control in the use of language to communicate effectively in specific situations) and *general principles* (the communication principle, the task principle, and the meaningfulness principle). Nunan (1991, pp. 279-295) has argued that it includes emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation, provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself, enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning; and the attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

being made to plan the linguistic content of lessons in advance and teaching that focuses on form being discouraged. This type of task-based planning represents the communicative approach to language teaching in one of its strongest forms and has been criticised on the grounds that it confuses means and ends (Crombie, 1988, p. 287) and that, particularly in the case of adult learners, it is the linguistic rather than the conceptual difficulty of tasks (the latter being, in any case, very difficult to specify) that is fundamentally relevant to language teaching and learning (Her, 2007, pp. 49-50). Furthermore, as Kumaravadivelu (1993) has observed, tasks are defined in very different ways by different writers²³. They can, in fact, according to Williams and Burden, (1997, p. 167), include almost "anything the learners are given to do (or choose to do) in the language classroom to further the process of language learning".

Writing in the early 1980s, Breen (1987b) observed that "[from] the analysis of actual tasks which exemplify target language communication, the designer will select and cluster those tasks for the syllabus which are most common in the target situation, or most generalisable to the target situation . . . or most relevant in terms of learner need and interest, or through some combination of these selection criteria" (p. 162), adding that task sequencing cannot be wholly pre-planned in that there is a need to respond to "emerging learner problems and difficulties" (p.164). Since then, principles of task selection have been the subject of considerable debate. Thus, for example, task difficulty has been discussed in terms of planning time and prior information (Robinson, Ting & Urwin, 1996), informational familiarity (Foster & Skehan, 1996) and a multiplicity of factors such as, for example, "the length of the text, the propositional density . . . the amount of low frequency vocabulary, the speed of spoken texts and the number of speakers involved, the explicitness of the information, the discourse structure and the clarity with which this is signalled" as well as "the amount of textual support [including pictures and diagrams] provided and the ordering of information" (Nunan, 1989b, p. 98)²⁴. As Her (2007, p. 51) notes "[g]iven the bewildering array

²³ See, for example, Candlin (1987, p.10); Crookes (1986, p. 1); Krahnke (1987, p. 67); Long (1985, p. 89); Nunan, (1993, p. 59); Prabhu (1987, p. 24); Richards, Platt & Weber (1985, p. 289); Skehan (1996, p.38).

²⁴ He does add linguistic complexity to the list but it is given no particular prominence.

of factors that apparently affect task difficulty, it would not be surprising if language teachers felt confused rather than enlightened, particularly as Nunan . . . goes on to refer to Candlin's categories of "problematicity, implementability and combinability"²⁵ and also provides a checklist including "goals and rationale, input, activities, roles and settings, and implementation" (in relation to the evaluation of communicative tasks) and "goals and rationale, input, activities, roles and settings, and implementation" (in relation to the evaluation of communicative tasks) (p. 51)^{26,27}.

Nunan (1989b, p. 10)²⁸ recommends that tasks should be used to create a context in which learners are involved in "comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language *while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form*" (emphasis added), while Willis (1996) recommends a three stage task cycle in which learners first attempt to complete a task (struggling with language as they go), are then given help which focuses on form, and, finally, reflect on that language.

There is a major difference between task-based and task-supported approaches. In the former, course content is specified in terms of tasks (i.e. tasks constitute the syllabus). In the latter, tasks simply form a part of the learning cycle. Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993, pp. 154-156), argue that tasks should accompany, rather than constitute, a language syllabus. As the following extract indicates, they

²⁵ Candlin, 1987, pp. 5-22

²⁶ Nunan, 1989b, pp. 135-137

²⁷ Among the criteria for task selection are: relevance to the learner, complexity (number of steps involved), amount of context provided, world knowledge required, language demands, level of accuracy required and time available (Brindley, 1987); cognitive complexity, communicative difficulty, sequencing of sub-tasks and linguistic complexity (Candlin, 1987); noticing/recognising input, organization and structuring of the language, extent of hypothesis-making inferences, and generalizing and transferring information (Candlin & Nunan, 1987); grammatical and lexical complexity and text length and propositional density, speed and participant numbers (in the case of oral texts), genre, sequencing and discourse structure, extent of pictorial support (Nunan, 1989b); interactional activity and communicative goal (Pica, Kanagy & Falodun (1993); cognitive load, planning time and prior information (Robinson, Ting & Urwin (1996); and code complexity and cognitive complexity and communicative stress (Skehan, 1992).

²⁸ A variation on this is Willis' (1996) three stage task cycle in which learners are invited to struggle to express themselves adequately in an attempt to complete a task *before* they are given help by the teacher on improving a presentation (focus on form) which they subsequently share. At the end of the cycle, they are invited to reflect, in a language-focus session, on the language that has emerged. This represents an inversion of the approach adopted by many experienced language teachers.

clearly had difficulty in dealing with the relationships between tasks and syllabuses:

Throughout our entire argument we have scrupulously avoided the thorny issues related to syllabus design. By arguing for the teaching of grammar through task-based methodology, we are in no way implying that we favour a return to the traditional grammatical syllabus. Indeed, rather than argue for a particular syllabus type . . . we suggest that such tasks be used in any situation wherein the goals of instruction are compatible with the idea that structure and meaning are necessarily highly interrelated. . . . We recommend that task designers look at specific structurally-based processing problems to be overcome rather than at specific grammar points in a structural syllabus By starting with processing and working back to grammar, the connection between the two is more likely to be strong. . . . In the classroom, by repeatedly focusing the learner on relevant information (e.g. meaningful structural contrasts) one can facilitate the process of restructuring and automatization. Through this incidental focus on form, the process of SLA [second language acquisition] can be sped up and taken to a higher level of ultimate attainment.

Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) provide no evidence for the position they adopt in relation to accelerated language acquisition. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that while there has been considerable debate about the relative merits of ‘focus on forms’, conceptualized as progressive step-by-step exposure, and ‘focus on form’ (conceptualized as exposure through noticing during tasks which are meaning-focused (see, for example, Ellis, 1991)), there is no direct evidence *based on day-to-day classroom teaching and learning* in favour of the latter. Indeed, Sheen (2003) observed over a decade ago that Long’s (1988) focus on form approach was becoming “a myth in the making” (p. 225). He added that such “[developing] myths are often used as arguments to support new teaching practices and subsequent unjustified reforms” (p. 232).

Skehan (1996; 1998) has reviewed a number of developments in cognitive psychology that appear to support a dual-mode perspective on language processing, one in which "the powerful generative system . . . may be bypassed most of the time" in favour of memory-based processing that enables real-time communication, which "emphasizes familiarity, meaning and memory rather than originality, form, and computation" (Skehan, 1998, pp. 285 & 286). In connection with this, he has argued that a lack of emphasis on one of these modes (the generative one) may impact in a negative way on interlanguage development (Skehan, 1996, p. 42):

Tasks themselves, given their defining properties of meaning primacy, outcome evaluation, and realism, may well predispose those engaged in task completion to engage in a mode of communication which does not prioritize a focus on form As a result, it may not be possible to rely on a task-based approach to automatically drive interlanguage forward.

2.4.7.2 Procedural frameworks

Breen (1987b) refers to 'process syllabuses' which he distinguished from task-based ones in that they "[extend] the focus upon procedures for learning to account for the actual social situation in which learning takes place . . . providing a bridge between content and methodology and . . . *offering a means whereby the actual syllabus of a classroom group may be made more accessible to each of its members*" (emphasis added) (p. 65). He adds that "[the] designer will not focus upon, select, subdivide or sequence content" but "provide a framework which enables teachers and learners to do these things themselves and, therefore, *create their own syllabus in the classroom* in an ongoing and adaptive way" (p.166), providing "a plan relating to the major decisions which teacher and learners need to make during classroom language learning" and "a bank of classroom activities which are themselves made up of sets of tasks" (p. 166). This type of framework for syllabus decision-making is not dealt with in any further detail here as it involves planning for syllabus specification rather than syllabus specification itself.

A distinction is sometimes made between procedural syllabuses/ frameworks and 'project syllabuses' which are defined by Legutke and Thomas (1991, p. 160) as involving "a theme and task-centred mode of teaching and learning which results from a joint process of negotiation between all participants" In effect, however, this appears to be a variation on the procedural framework in which projects involving collaborative activity are prioritized.

2.4.8 Skills-based syllabuses: A focus on reading and writing

2.4.8.1 Reading syllabuses

In the early decades of the twentieth century, reading was viewed as involving a process of data-driven decoding, that is, of recovering meanings that were held to be embedded in texts. Vocabulary and the rules of grammar were emphasised, with little or no attention being paid to other aspects of discourse construction and comprehension (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 23). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the emphasis was often on reading aloud (with a focus on pronunciation) rather than developing strategies which focused on meaning, the underlying belief being that the more often something was repeated, the stronger the habit became. The teaching of reading thus continued to be data driven, with comprehension continuing to be seen as involving little more than decoding the information which was presumed to reside in texts (Su, 2008, p. 77). Gradually, however, partly due to the impact of the research of Chomsky in the area of first language acquisition, cognitive code learning theory, which centres on discovery and hypothesis formation rather than habit formation, began to have an impact on L2 teaching, including the teaching of reading. In the area of reading instruction, it was increasingly recognized that effective reading involves making inferences based on a combination of text, context and existing knowledge and understanding (Samuels & Kamil, 1984, p. 206). Although, as Eskey (1973) and Saville-Troike (1973) have observed, reading instruction often continued (and often still continues) to be based largely on a decoding model, the impact of Smith's (1971) redundancy theory and Goodman's (1967) reading process model gradually began to be felt, partly as a result of the development of the concepts of communicative competence and communicative language teaching which, as Widdowson (1978, p. 144) has observed, include emphasis on the relationships of

meaning that hold between sentences/ utterances and larger units of text/discourse, something that is clearly relevant to the teaching of reading.

In the late 1970s, Coady (1979) developed a model for second/ foreign language reading that was based on recognition of the fact that text processing involves inferencing. That model, which represented the beginning of the development of a top-down approach, treated comprehension as the outcome of the interaction between the reader's background knowledge, his or her conceptual abilities (general intellectual capacity) and a range of process strategies. Coady's model, together with developments in the area of schema theory²⁹, began to have an impact on the teaching of reading in L1 and L2 contexts. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983, p. 555) observed that "schema . . . serve as the basis on which newly learned information is organized in memory". Thus, according to the principles of schema theory, interpretation, including the interpretation involved in reading, involves mapping available information onto an appropriate schema which is already stored in memory (Chandler, 1995). This necessarily involves both top-down processing and bottom-up processing, the first making use of background knowledge or contextual clues to interpret incoming data, the second involving sensitivity to new or unfamiliar information (Rumelhart, 1980). The schemata involved are of two types – formal schemata and content schemata. *Formal schemata* are text-based and involve, for example, background knowledge of the overall rhetorical structuring of texts written in different genres; *content schemata* involve background knowledge of the content area of the text³⁰ Making reference to schema theory, a number of specialists in the area of reading, such as Rumelhart (1977) and Stanovich (1980), developed interactive reading models, which involve the simultaneous engagement of top-down and bottom-up processing.³¹ As Su (2008, p. 80) observes, reading strategies (such as predicting, guessing on the basis of context and skimming and scanning) are at least as

²⁹ Bartlett (1932, p.206) observed that "schema arise from the learners' previous encounters with their environment, and serve as the basis on which newly learned information is organized in memory".

³⁰ Carrell (1983) has argued that that lack of content knowledge and of formal schemata is the main reason why second or foreign language learners have difficulty in interpreting written text.

³¹ According to Eskey (1988), Stanovich (1980) and Paran (1997), interactive processing involves compensatory strategies, with one type of processing taking over wherever there is a problem with the other type. The less adept readers are at top-down processing, the more they will rely on bottom-up processing such as word recognition and syntactic structure.

important as structure and vocabulary and coherence is at least as importance as cohesion.

With all of this in place, it became possible to develop syllabuses specific to reading, syllabuses that include top-down and bottom-up processing and focus on a wide range of reading strategies.

2.4.8.2 Writing syllabuses

In the context of the teaching of writing (both L1 and L2 writing), the approach to syllabus specification has varied considerably since the 1950s. Three ‘phases’ in the teaching of writing since around the 1950s have been identified: a *product phase* (sometimes referred to as ‘current traditional rhetoric’ (Young 1978, p. 31)); a *process phase* and a *post-process phase*, the last of which is often particularly associated with genre-centred approaches to writing instruction. It is important to note, however, that the conceptualisation of the teaching of writing in terms of ‘phases’ represents a type of *post-facto* rationalization in that what are now perceived of as relatively distinct phases were, in reality, overlapping. It would therefore, perhaps, be more appropriate to say that three very broadly-based approaches to writing instruction, none of which can be strictly specified in terms of either chronology or content, have been identified. To refer to them in this way accommodates the fact that it has been argued that the terminology itself (product/current traditional rhetoric; process; post-process) was created as a way of validating/ valorizing particular perspectives. Thus, for example, Miller (1991, p. 110) has noted that the term ‘current traditional rhetoric’ was actually created as a way of promoting ‘process theory’ by representing it as being “‘pitted against old practices’, and Tobin (1994, p. 4) has argued that the use of the term ‘process approach’ in the singular creates “a misleading image of unity and coherence”. After all, as Faigley (1986) has observed, many different approaches to the teaching of writing have claimed to be process-oriented. Similarly, Matsuda (2003, p. 73) notes that “the post-process movement does not represent a unified theoretical front” (Matsuda, p.73), adding that what is often referred to as post-process pedagogy “needs to be understood not as the rejection of process but as

the recognition of the multiplicity of L2 writing theories and pedagogies” (p. 65)³².

The 1940s and 1950s is a period that has been particularly associated, retrospectively, with what is sometimes referred to as a ‘product-oriented’ approach, one in which there was a tendency for teachers of writing to focus on the products of writing tasks rather than on processes involved in the production of these products. So far as L2 writing is concerned, where there was pre-teaching, the focus tended to be on vocabulary and decontextualized structures, echoing the type of focus found in other areas of L2 language programmes and reflecting an essentially structural approach to the specification of language content.

As early as the 1960s, a different approach, often referred to as ‘the process–approach’, was in a developmental stage (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones & Schoer, 1963). This approach, often associated in particular with work by Emig (1971), was initially primarily related to L1 writing classrooms and was often, according to Matsuda (2003, p. 67), linked to a conventionalized five paragraph essay structure. Also commonly associated with this approach were five main stages: *prewriting* (preparation in the form of planning and discussing/ researching), *drafting*, *revising* (typically including responding to the feedback of peers and/or teachers), *editing* (correcting mechanical errors) and *publishing* (producing a final version and sharing it with others). A common feature of process writing was/is the de-centring of the role of the teacher, whose primary task was/is seen as facilitating learning (Lin, 2010, p. 55) by providing feedback and a sense of audience (Tangpermpoon, 2008, p. 5) in the context of “a process of discovery, a process of exploring . . . of creating, testing, and refining hypotheses” (Odell, 1980, p. 140). In one of its most extreme forms, it involves the type of ‘free writing’ advocated by Elbow (1973) which is intended to empower students by removing the “psychological or existential difficulty” associated with “wondering, worrying, crossing out, having second, third, and fourth thoughts” (p. 14).

³² The term ‘post-process’ was not used with reference to writing instruction until the 1990s when it appeared in an article by Trimbur (1994).

According to Lin (2010, p. 29), an Anglo-American seminar held at Dartmouth in New England in 1966 provided the major impetus for the adoption of a process approach to writing (largely in L1 contexts) in terms of its advocacy of student-centred learning. In *Growth through English* (Dixon, 1967), a book that reports on the Dartmouth Seminar, there is clear evidence of a new direction in educational philosophy involving a rejection of a focus on mechanical aspects of language and writing (including sentence-level grammar and punctuation) in favour of an emphasis on creativity and experimentation³³.

Although it has been claimed that the processes involved in process-centred approaches to the teaching of writing are psychological ones (see, for example, Atkinson (2003, p. 10); Bereiter (1980, p. 78); Grabe & Kaplan (1996, p. 84)), both North (1987) and Susser (1993) have argued that process-based teaching is actually based on pedagogic processes, or, in fact, simply on a set of pedagogic practices (Susser, 1993, p. 33).

Process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing have been subject to adverse criticism, including the fact that, in the L2 context, they tend to largely ignore “the constraints imposed by imperfect knowledge of the language code involved” (Caudery, 1995, ¶41) (see also Wolff (2000, p. 107) and Badger and White (2000, p. 15)), a criticism that cannot be levelled at those post-process approaches that are largely genre-centred.

The term ‘genre’ has been used in a range of different ways in the context of approaches to the study of texts/ discourses and in the context of approaches to the teaching of writing. Some of these studies have tended to focus largely on ‘text

³³ Lin (2010, p. 32) makes a connection between the Dartmouth seminar and a range of developments in both L1 and L2 teaching generally. "Many of those who attended the Dartmouth conference seem to have been ready to accept pockets of research that purported to demonstrate that specific instruction in language could be positively harmful (see, for example, Harris, 1962). Of course, it has since been revealed that much of the research that claimed that the teaching of grammar was either pointless or positively harmful was based on the teaching of decontextualized traditional, Latin-based grammar. Nevertheless, research of this type eventually led to a situation in which specific language instruction was largely removed from the first language curriculum. So far as second/foreign language teaching is concerned, the broader context was one in which a move away from a focus on sentence grammar towards a focus on ‘communicative competencies’ and ‘communicative language teaching’ was initially often interpreted in an extreme way that involved a rejection of specific language instruction".

types' (e.g. novels; academic articles); others on 'discourse modes' (e.g. argument; recount)³⁴. In some cases, the focus of attention is primarily on overall rhetorical structure (sometimes referred to as 'generic structure') (see, for example, Swales, 1990); in other cases, it is primarily on internal discourse structure (the occurrence, co-occurrence and interaction of various types of discourse/ semantic relation) (see, for example, Bruce, 2003). In some cases, detailed attention is paid to language specifics (see, for example, Lin, 2010); in others it is not. One thing that most studies now have in common is that they are based on the belief that texts that can be associated with the same genre may vary considerably. For this reason, the concept of prototypes (exemplifying those features/ characteristics that are associated with texts that typify particular genres) has become important (see, for example, Swales, 1990, p. 49).

Within the context of L2 writing instruction, genre-oriented programmes typically involve a number of stages, including, for example, *preparation* (gathering relevant information, etc.); *modelling* (presentation and discussion of model texts that exhibit the features that will be the focus of attention); *joint construction* (combining teacher and student resources to create a text jointly) and *independent construction* (individual students create their own texts) (see, for example, Derewianka, 1994).

Product-oriented and process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing are largely methodologically-centred, although product-oriented approaches may include an orientation towards a type of syllabus specification that focuses on mechanical aspects of writing (e.g. spelling and punctuation) combined with lexical and grammatical specifications and some focus on paragraphing (including, for example, topic sentence types). Post-process (genre-centred) approaches tend to be very specific in terms of syllabus specification, combining aspects of top-down and bottom-up process specification. Thus, for example, Lin (2010, pp. 151-158), in focusing on five main discourse modes/ cognitive genres

³⁴ What I have referred to as 'text types' are referred to as 'genres' by Biber (1989) and Hyland (2007), as 'text genres' by Pilegaard and Frandsen (1996) and as 'social genres' by Bruce (2003), and what I have referred to as 'discourse modes' are referred to as 'elemental genres' by Hyland (2007), as 'text types' by Biber (1989) and Pilegaard & Frandsen (1996) and as 'cognitive genres' by Bruce (2003).

(*instruction; argument* (one-sided and two-sided), *description & classification; recount; and explanation*), includes syllabus specifications that relate to overall rhetorical structuring (the steps or moves that give overall structure to the texts) and internal discourse structuring (the preponderance of different types of discourse relation and their co-occurrence and interaction) as well as specific aspects of language associated with each of these.

2.4.9 Content-based syllabuses

The literature on content-based syllabuses varies widely. Some writers, such as Krahnke (1987 p. 65) and Eskey (1973, p.133), argue that content-based syllabuses do not need to include a clear focus on language, language being learnt incidentally as subject content is covered. Others, such as Snow (1998), argue that the concept of a content-based syllabus could include both a 'language-driven' and a 'content-driven' option.

In his account of what he refers to as a content-based syllabus, Krankhe (1987, p. 67) observes that it simply involves teaching content areas through the target language with little or no direct effort to focus on specific language. While he notes that some content-based programmes *do* include an 'instructional component' that focuses on language, he insists that this is not central. If, however, a programme focuses wholly on subject content, it would appear that that subject content, rather than language, constitutes the syllabus. If, on the other hand, there is an instructional component that focuses on the target language, then that instructional component would appear to constitute a language syllabus, one that might be described in different ways depending on the nature of that component.

With reference to content-based syllabuses, Eskey (1997, p. 133) argues that "people do not learn languages and then use them" but that "people learn languages by using them". While few would argue with this apparently self-evident proposition, it makes no genuine contribution to the debate. It remains the case that a programme that focuses on content rather than language is, irrespective of whether the learners are already competent in the language, no different from any other subject matter course (Mohan, 1986).

Snow (1998, p. 243) maintains that a content-centred programme may be 'content-driven' or 'language-driven'. While he refers to the fact that such a programme may 'consist of a list of topics', he provides no clear indication of how the language content of a language driven programme might be organized and, therefore, leaves the issue of the approach to language content open except in so far as he refers, in places, to 'focusing on form' and to 'functions', adding that content is a 'third dimension'.

Graddol (2006) discusses 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL) as a new trend in Europe, referring specifically to a system developed in Finland in the 1990s in a bilingual educational context. He notes that this involves providing "the necessary language support alongside the subject specialism" and means that English teachers need to work closely with subject teachers "to ensure that language development is appropriately catered for" (p. 86), adding that "[t]here is no orthodoxy as to how, exactly, CLIL should be implemented and diverse practices have evolved".

2.5 Some concluding comments

A full appreciation of the L2 syllabus design proposals discussed here, and the reasons why they have been proposed requires some understanding of changes and developments that have taken place in a range of disciplines, including linguistics, psychology and education, as well as the political, economic and social context in which these changes and developments have taken place. Some of these syllabus design proposals are unlikely to have had any real impact on the majority of language teachers. Some, especially those that have the endorsement of powerful organisations such as the Council of Europe, are likely to have had some impact on them, either directly or through the mediation of textbooks and national and local curricula which may draw upon them in a variety of different ways. However, while there is a great deal of research, particularly in the area of language teacher cognition, that aims to determine what impact, if any, developments in language teaching methodology have had on language teachers in various parts of the world, there is no equivalent large body of research that relates to the impact (direct and/or indirect) on language teachers of developments

in the area of L2 syllabus design. My aim throughout the remainder of this thesis is to report on one attempt to begin to explore this issue by examining the ways in which the syllabuses that underpin some widely used textbooks have changed over the past few decades (reported in *Chapter 4*) and conducting a survey (involving questionnaires and semi-structured interviews) of a sample of teachers of English and language centre managers/ co-ordinators that focuses on how and why they make syllabus-related decisions (reported in *Chapters 5 and 6*).

Chapter Three

Introduction to the research methodology and research methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the methodological approach adopted (3.2) and then provides more detail relating to the research methods/ techniques that characterize each of the three main components of the research (3.3 - 3.5) and its location within the context of language teacher cognition (3.6). The chapter ends with a note on research ethics (3.7). Further detail relating to the conduct and reporting of the research is provided in the introductory sections of *Chapters 4 - 6*.

3.2 Overall approach to the research

The overall design of the research involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, the primary emphasis being qualitative. It involves triangulation, the same issue, that of the impact of syllabus design proposals on those professionally involved in the teaching of additional languages, being approached from three different angles using different methods/ techniques in each case. Central to the research design is language teacher cognition, described by Borg (2006, p. 1) as focusing on "what language teachers think, know and believe – and of its relationship to teachers' classroom practices". At all stages, the critical literature review (*Chapter 2*) plays a major role, with categories relating to the syllabus design proposals outlined there being central to (a) the design of questions included in a self-completion questionnaire (*Chapter 5*) and semi-structured interviews (*Chapter 6*) and (b) the approach to the analysis of a sample of widely used English language textbooks published from the mid-1960s onwards (*Chapter 4*). Almost all of the language teachers and language programme managers/ co-ordinators involved in the study were involved in the tertiary education sector, the reason for a primary focus on this sector being the fact that those involved in this sector are generally not constrained by, or not as constrained by national curricula in the way in which those involved in the primary and secondary education sectors frequently are.

3.3 The questionnaire-based survey

A questionnaire-based survey involving a sample of teachers of English as an additional language from five different countries (Japan, Taiwan, Syria, Australia and New Zealand) was conducted, the main aim being to determine how these teachers specify course objectives and organize and plan their course content and the extent to which published textbooks play a role in decision-making in this area. The questionnaire included a number of key questions, that is, questions relating to course and programme content and textbook choice and use. In some cases, these questions were designed to determine the significance attached by the institution in which participants worked to matters relating to the curriculum or the ways in which participants responded to any curriculum documents provided for them by their institution:

Does the institution where you work have an overall curriculum for the English courses it offers (showing, for example, the relationship between each of these courses in terms of level and specific content, and including reference to methodology and materials)?

If there are syllabus documents designed by your institution for the use at the level you teach, how useful [essential, very useful, useful, not very useful, not useful at all] do you find them?

A number of questions were designed to elicit responses that would indicate how important participants considered language syllabuses to be, how (if at all) they would go about designing course syllabuses if they were not provided by their institution, whether textbooks played a role in determining their course syllabuses, and whether they considered it important that courses taken by the same students in the same year should be related to one another (a positive response to the last of these being likely to indicate a belief in the importance of syllabus integration as part of the overall curriculum and, hence, a tendency to reject the procedural framework concept) (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.4.7.2).

It was decided that no direct reference would be made to syllabus types by name. This was because it was felt that this might result in (a) responses that reflected participants' beliefs about how they might be expected to respond in view of the fact that some types of syllabus have received more attention generally and/ or more positive or negative responses in the academic literature than others, or (b) non-responses, where participants were unfamiliar with the nomenclature or were unfamiliar with the details of particular syllabus type proposals (but might nevertheless have been influenced by them). Instead, words and phrases that were particularly associated with the syllabus design proposals discussed in the literature review were incorporated into the questions. These included, for example, 'tasks', 'learning strategies', 'specific language', 'types of link between clauses and sentences' and 'genres'. The questions themselves were then structured in a way that was designed to elicit responses that were indicative of attitudes and practices that are consistent with particular approaches to syllabus design. For example, participants were asked to indicate whether they believed each of the following statements to be 'true', 'false' or 'not relevant in my case':

It's best to structure lessons around tasks that involve language rather than structuring lessons around specific language that you want to teach;

It's best to structure lessons around the specific language that you want to teach rather than around tasks, although tasks should be included in lessons.

A positive response to the second of these was considered likely to be indicative of a preference for a task-supported approach rather than a task-based one (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.4.7.1).

Participants were also asked to indicate which of a number of genres (including *recount*, *narrative*, *instruction*, *argument*, *explanation* and *description*) they believed should be introduced at each of four 'levels' (beginner, elementary, intermediate, advanced). In this case, it was hoped that the responses would indicate the extent to which participants' views reflected the increasing emphasis

in discourse-centred approaches to syllabus design on incorporating a greater variety of genres into language programmes, including the early stages of these programmes (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.3.7.2).

In some cases, each participant's responses to questions would need to be considered as a whole. Thus, for example, one of the questions asked which of a number of possible syllabus content items (vocabulary, language structures, tasks, cohesive devices, unsignalled reasons, reasons signalled by 'because', reasons signalled by 'because of', etc.) participants would introduce at different levels (beginner, elementary, intermediate, advanced). Here, the pattern of choices might, for example, indicate a preference for a hybrid syllabus of the proportional type (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.3.1). In addition, a preference for introducing different types of signalling of the same inter-propositional relation (e.g. 'reasons signalled by 'because', reasons signalled by 'because of', reasons signalled by 'so', results signalled by 'therefore') at very different stages could be indicative of a tendency towards syntactic rather than notional-functional or relational syllabus style specification (see *Chapter 2*, sections 2.4.3 & 2.4.5).

A question in which participants were asked to provide one specific outcome of one of their courses along with the year and type of course (a question that was adapted from a similar one in a research project conducted by Her (2007)) was designed to determine whether they thought of the syllabus in very general terms (e.g. *students are able to communicate adequately on general topics*) or in more specific ones, the nature of that specificity potentially being indicative of a particular approach, such as a functional approach (e.g. *students are able to ask for directions*) or a structural one (e.g. *students are able to use the present simple tense appropriately*).

Questionnaire participants were asked not only whether they used textbooks but also whether, if they did so, they would be likely to select the next highest level textbook from the same series for the same students later in their programme. This question was followed by an invitation to add any comments participants wished. The reason for the inclusion of this question was that, particularly where

comments were added, there was a possibility that responses might indicate whether participants were aware of, or concerned about the fact that textbook series are generally based on cumulative language plans so that there is the possibility that students who move from one textbook series to another might not have been exposed to language that the authors assume they have been.

Two of the advantages of a survey-based approach involving a self-completion questionnaire are that it potentially allows for the inclusion of more participants than could be involved in the case of, for example, interviews and that it is amenable to statistical analysis where the questions included are closed, involving, for example, yes/no questions or selection of a point on a scale. However, one of the potential disadvantages is that it may provide no opportunity for respondents to provide nuanced information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, p. 382). In this case, although 28 of the 33 questions were closed, an invitation to add comments was attached to 15 of them, thus providing an opportunity for the provision of more information than would otherwise have been the case (at the same time as allowing for statistical analysis of much of the data). Even so, the fact that non-probability convenience sampling (pp. 155 - 160) was used (with people involved in tertiary level English language teaching who were known to the researcher being requested to participate and to request others they knew or were known to them to participate in a 'snowballing' fashion), meant that there were potential issues in relation to validity: there could be no guarantee that those involved were truly representative of the population as a whole. Thus, the findings must be regarded as indicative rather than conclusive (generalizable). Furthermore, although it was initially hoped that one of the main variables would be the country in which the participants taught, of the 93 participants, 37 were working in New Zealand, 22 in Taiwan, 18 in Japan, 12 in Australia and 4 in Syria. This led to a decision to use statistics descriptively (describing the data derived from the participants involved statistically) rather than inferentially (reaching conclusions concerning the population as a whole on the basis of the sample). It also led to a decision to use independent sample t-tests (aiming to detect differences in averages) only in relation to instances where there might be particularly interesting differences between the responses of those teaching in a

context in which English was the primary medium of communication (New Zealand and Australia - 49) and of those teaching in a context in which English was not the primary medium of communication (Taiwan, Japan and Syria - 44).

The way in which the findings of the questionnaire-based survey are reported was determined, in part, by the fact that this research project was based largely in *Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao* (The School of Māori and Pacific Development) at the University of Waikato and was, therefore, subject to the usual ethical requirements of *Te Kāhui Manutāiko* (the School's research ethics committee) which take into account consistency with the principles underpinning *Kaupapa Māori* research (see, for example, Smith, 2012). While many of these principles did not apply in this case, two were considered to be both relevant and important: *Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (Do not trample on the mana of people) and *Titiro, whakarongo . . . korero* (Look, listen . . . speak). As Peters (2014, p. 17) argues, principles such as these have implications for the way in which research is reported. They were, for example, relevant to Peters' determination to attempt to provide a way of highlighting and promoting the voices of his research participants ("allowing these voices, wherever possible, to speak for themselves" and to be "as fully and accurately represented as possible"). While "providing a lens through which the data [could] be viewed", he also wished to provide for the possibility that "both the participants themselves and other readers [might wish to] reorganize and reinterpret the data". It was with these things in mind that he decided to (a) include in appendices not only full transcripts of all interviews (with information that might reveal the identity of participants having been removed) but also to include all of the comments made by questionnaire participants, and (b) provide as full and unadorned an account as possible of the data collected from questionnaire respondents and interviewees *before* imposing his own interpretation on them.

In reporting on the questionnaire-based survey (and the interviews conducted as part of this research project), I have been guided by Peters' approach. The data reporting follows the order of the questions in the questionnaire. However, following an overview of the cohort, the discussion section is organized around

five main themes, the central text relating to each of them being followed by a summary in italic print. Each of the themes was selected because it related directly to the primary focus of the research (e.g. curriculum, syllabus and lesson planning) and subsumed a number of different questions which could usefully be treated together because each of them dealt with a different aspect of the overall theme in focus.

3.4 The interviews

The interview-based survey narrows down the participant base and location base, involving considerably fewer participants than the questionnaire-based one - a total of five - and focusing on participants operating in the tertiary education sector in a single country (New Zealand). In this case, the participants were all English language programme managers/ co-ordinators who the researcher knew or who contacts of the researcher knew. In their professional capacity, these people are necessarily often involved in making decisions about language syllabus design that impact on English language teachers as well as students. Hence the importance of exploring their attitudes and approaches and the extent to which they appeared to be in line with, or to conflict with those of the English language teachers involved in the questionnaire-based survey.

The interviews were of the type described by Patton (1980, p. 206) as being 'standardized open ended' ones. The central questions were determined in advance, thus ensuring that topics of particular relevance to the research programme were included and that the information provided by the respondents could be compared, contrasted and reported on with relative ease. However, the option of following up on interviewee responses was allowed for, thus (a) creating a greater sense of reciprocity than is characteristic in the case of fully structured interviews, (b) opening up the possibility of collection of more in-depth information and opinion on the topics covered, and (c) providing a context in which the interviewees might reveal information and opinion which, while perhaps not being of a type that had been anticipated, might nevertheless be of interest and relevance.

Decisions relating to the nature of the central, pre-determined questions were motivated largely by:

- (a) The need to identify the types of course offered by the institutions represented by the interviewees and the source of decision-making within their institutions. For example:

*Which courses do you offer. For example relation for example,
core language development courses;
skills-specific courses (e.g. reading courses);
ESP academic courses;
Other ESP courses?*

If you have them [documents that outline the content of each of your courses] who is responsible for designing these documents?

- (b) A desire to further explore issues relating directly to the questions included in the questionnaire and/or arising out of the responses of questionnaire participants. For example:

Are your courses described in terms of levels? If so, do you have statements that describe the different levels? Could you give me an example?

Would you say that the main focus of the majority courses taught in your institute is (a) grammar, (b) tasks, (c) vocabulary, (d) language skills, (e) learning skills, (f) some combination of these?

Does your institution have documents that outline the content of each of your courses? If so, how detailed are these documents? Do they include specific language that is to be taught and, if so, how is it described?

How is the content of end of course tests/ exams determined?

(c) The fact that the qualifications and training of staff were likely to impact on their capacity to make syllabus and syllabus-related decisions in an informed way. For example:

What qualifications do you expect your teachers to have as a minimum?

The reason for the inclusion of the following question was the fact that several of the questionnaire respondents included examples of course outcomes in very general terms (suggesting that they might be thinking of course outcomes in terms of overall proficiency rather than in terms of language specifics). This is something that could be considered to be consistent with some task-based approaches to syllabus design (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.4.7).

Do you think it is important that your teachers are aware of how the field/ area of English language teaching has developed over time? Do you try to ensure that your teachers are aware of important developments in language teaching, past and present? If so, how?

This was also a factor in the decision to include the following two questions:

Are there any courses offered by your institution that you would be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test (such as IELTS) rather than an internal exam and if so, which type of courses are they?

How is the content of end of course tests/ exams determined?

In the case of the first of the two questions above, another important consideration in relation to its inclusion is the fact that tertiary institutions often offer places to international students on the basis, in part, of performance in a proficiency test such as the IELTS. As noted in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 183 -

184), there is a fundamental difference between achievement-based assessment (assessment of the achievement of specific objectives) and proficiency-based assessment (assessment of what someone can do/knows in relation to application in the real world). Clearly, issues relating to the extent to which there is consistency between achievement objectives, syllabus content (and teaching methodologies) and approaches to assessment is something that is critical so far as teachers as well as learners are concerned.

Inclusion of the second question above was considered important in view of the fact that approaches to testing and assessment need to reflect not only the methodological approaches with which learners have been familiarized in their courses but also the syllabus/ course content. As Elder and Wigglesworth (1996, p.1) observe:

The assessment of second language learners raises complex issues about the nature of language proficiency, the validity of assessment instruments, the reliability of scores, and the manner in which the whole process may influence the curriculum. The range of issues raised is not only of importance to those who design and develop language tests; they are also of importance to a variety of people who may be involved at various points in the cycle: the funding bodies, the test takers and language teachers.

Although the questionnaire asked participants to indicate which of a number of genres they believed should be included in courses at different levels, it did not ask them to indicate what type of content they believed should be included in skills-specific courses, such as reading or writing courses. The interviews did, however, include the following questions:

*What sort of things do you believe should be taught in a writing course?
Could you give an example?*

In relation to the previous question, what sorts of things do you think your teachers generally teach in writing courses?

These questions were included because it was felt that the responses might indicate the extent to which interviewees were aware of how developments in the area of discourse analysis have impacted on changing approaches to the design of syllabuses for writing courses and, in particular, their awareness of the development of genre-based approaches (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.4.8). In connection with this, it is relevant to note that whereas questionnaire respondents were asked what aspects of discourse they considered important to include in their courses (a question considered important in relation to a number of different approaches to syllabus design, including the notional-functional approach and the relational approach (see *Chapter 2*, sections 2.4.3 & 2.4.5)), no equivalent question was included in the interviews because it was felt that responses to a number of different questions included in the interviews, taken together, would cover this area adequately.

A further point that should be made in connection with the interviews is the fact that each interviewee was invited to supply the researcher with any documentation they had that related to their institution's English language curriculum. It was felt that such documentation would not only be of interest in itself but that it could usefully be reviewed in light of interviewees' responses to a number of the questions included in the interviews. At the same time, it was accepted that any inconsistencies between the data provided by the interviewees and the content of the documentation might, in some cases, be more apparent than real in that (a) there might be some documentation that interviewees were not prepared to reveal because of its commercially sensitive nature, and (b) such documentation as was made available might be expressed in a way that was intended largely to attract clients.

In the case of the interviews, the reporting of data is organized around two main themes - *issues relating to the curriculum* and *teachers' qualifications and professional development*. The first of these is divided into eleven sub-categories,

one of which (i.e. *Decision making: Responsibility and process*) was selected because both questionnaire and interview responses indicated that teachers were often expected to take major responsibility for issues relating to syllabus content. It was also for this reason that the other major reporting theme was selected. Each of the remaining ten sub-categories relating to the curriculum (e.g. *Assessment and Course integration*) was selected because interviewee responses indicated its significance in relation to syllabus-related decision-making. Throughout the reporting of the interview data, reference is made, for comparative purposes, to the data collected from questionnaire respondents. Because the reporting of interview responses did not follow the sequencing of the questions asked, each category and sub-category is introduced with a summary (in italic print) of the relevant questions. In the discussion section that follows, there are, once again, two main themes. In this case, however, the sub-categories relating to the curriculum area are reduced from eleven to seven, some (e.g. *Assessment*) remaining as separate sub-categories while others combine aspects of the original sub-themes, sometimes highlighting particular aspects of responses, as in the case of, for example, the decision to refer specifically to the CEFR in relation to proficiency in the case of one of the sub-categories (e.g. *Proficiency, proficiency-testing and the impact of the CEFR*). One of the sub-headings in the discussion section does not relate directly to the sub-headings included in the data reporting section. Under this sub-heading (i.e. *The documentation*), the actual content of curriculum documents provided by the interviewees is compared with statements about that content made by them. In relation to this, it is important to bear in mind that the documentation provided may not have included all of the documentation that is actually made available to teachers.

3.5 Textbook selection and analysis

One aspect of the research reported here is the selection and analysis, in relation to their underlying syllabus types, of textbooks produced from the 1960s onwards. This was considered to be of interest in itself in that links could be made between syllabus design proposals emerging over the years and changes and developments in the syllabuses and syllabus-types underpinning textbooks published at different times. In addition, in view of the ubiquity of textbooks (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p. 315) and the fact that they may actually serve as a substitute for

independently designed course syllabuses (Fullan, 1991, p. 70), it was considered that such a review, might, in association with questionnaire and interview responses, reveal inconsistencies between the actual syllabuses and syllabus-types underpinning some courses and programmes and informants' perceptions of the nature of these syllabuses.

In selecting textbooks for analysis, a number of factors were taken into consideration. Among these were extent of use and date of first publication. In most cases, only textbooks that were, or had been widely available and were, or had been widely used around the time of their publication were included. In some cases, however, reference is made to textbooks that are in some ways unusual, as in the case of, for example, the textbooks in the *Reading and Thinking in English* series (The British Council, 1979a & b; 1980a & b), a series which appears to be in some ways ahead of its time. Furthermore, because the research is oriented towards the tertiary education sector, it was considered important to include textbooks with a focus on English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

In view of the impossibility of analysing a very large number of textbooks in any useful detail, a decision was made, in the case of series, to select only one of the books in the series for analysis since the principles guiding the selection and organization of content did not appear to differ in any fundamental ways from one textbook to another in the same series.

In most cases, where textbooks are/were accompanied by teachers' guides, these guides were found to centre primarily on methodology rather than syllabus and so these guides proved to be of little direct relevance in relation to the primary focus of the analyses. However, where they do/did contain relevant information, this has been included.

So far as the textbook analysis itself is concerned, decisions made in relation to the approach adopted were largely determined by aspects of the literature review (as was also the case in decision-making relating to the nature of the questions included in the questionnaire and interviews). As the textbooks analysed were

published at different times, some well before certain syllabus design proposals were forwarded, the focus points guiding the analyses are fewer in the case of the books published earlier, with the number of focus points gradually increasing in relation to later dates of first publication. The first two textbooks analysed were *Situational English* (The Commonwealth Office of Education, 1965) and *New Concept English* (Alexander, 1967). Both of them were first published in the mid-1960s. This was before many of the syllabus design proposals discussed in *Chapter 2* were forwarded (and at a time when behaviourism and linguistic structuralism still held way). It was, however, after the publication of *Le Français Fondamental* which played an important role in the development of the grammatico-lexical syllabus type, often referred to simply as the 'grammatical syllabus' (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.4.1) and after the emergence in Britain of situational (more accurately, 'situationalized') approaches to syllabus specification. Hence, the main focus points in relation to which the analyses of these textbooks was conducted relate to structural, lexical, situational and topical content. The first two volumes in the *Strategies* series (Abbs & Freebairn, 1977 & 1979) were, however, published in the late 1970s, that is, after proposals relating to the development of notion-functional syllabuses (see *Chapter 2*, section 2.4.3). Therefore, the focus points guiding the analysis in this case were extended to include notions and functions. In the case of textbooks focusing on EAP published from the early 1990s onwards, such as *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (Swales & Feak, 1994) and *Making connections* (Pakenham, 2005), first publication occurred after all of the major syllabus design proposals discussed in *Chapter 2* had been developed. For this reason, the analysis needed to centre on a wider range of focus points, including vocabulary, syntax, coherence and cohesion, genre, text-type, cross-disciplinary organizational structures, and skills and sub-skills. Thus, the focus points guiding the analysis of different textbooks vary depending on the date of publication of the textbooks and, hence, the possible impact of various different proposals relating to syllabus design.

3.6 Language teacher cognition

As indicated above, a central aspect of the research project reported here is language teacher cognition (LTC) which Borg (2006, p. 1) has described as focusing on "what language teachers think, know and believe – and of its

relationship to teachers' classroom practices". In this case, however, it is not only classroom teachers but also language programme managers/ co-ordinators (who may not currently also be classroom teachers) who are included in the study³⁵, thus allowing for a comparison of both groups. Furthermore, what informants appear to think, know and believe (as reported in questionnaires and interviews) is compared not only with what they do in observed lessons (as is often the case in language teacher cognition research) but also with some of the things they do that have an impact on lessons (designing courses, determining the achievement objectives of these courses, selecting textbooks). Also, whereas much language teacher cognition research focuses on methodology (e.g. Kervas-Doukas, 1999; Nunan, 1987; Watzke, 2007; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999 & 2004) and/or the impact of language teacher education on beliefs and practices (e.g. Da Silva, 2005; Johnson, 1996; Numrich, 1996; Spada & Massey, 1992; Wang, 2008), in this case the primary focus is on the language syllabus. Finally, a central aspect of the study is the nature and extent of any relationship between research-based literature that relates to the language syllabus and the attitudes, beliefs and, to a lesser extent, practices of the informants. Taken together, all of these things signal a slightly new direction in LTC research, one which has the potential to throw additional light on the complexities of the language teaching profession.

3.7 A note on research ethics

Reference has already been made (see 3.3 above) to the fact that ethical considerations impact on the reporting of the research. Other issues relating to research ethics are discussed in the introductory sections of Chapters 5 and 6. There is, however, one aspect of research ethics to which I believe it is important to refer here. The names of all of the participants in this research project have been removed or replaced by pseudonyms and an attempt has been made to remove from interview transcripts all references that might lead directly to the identification of the individuals concerned or the institutions represented by them. In addition, all of the interview transcripts were given to the interviewees with a request that they decide whether any alterations should be made. The versions included here are those that were approved. Nevertheless, some readers may

³⁵ A study by Her (2007) explored the cognitions of a number of senior managers operating in a tertiary institution in Taiwan that focuses primarily on language education.

believe that they can guess, on the basis of some of the information supplied, who one or more of the interview participants are and which institutions they represent and they may, in addition, disagree with some of the views expressed by these informants. I therefore believe that it is important to stress here the very real contribution that these informants have made to this research project as a result of their willingness to participate and also to remind readers of the fact that the research-based literature, written by people with considerably more time for reflection than is available in a short interview, is riddled with contradictions, inconsistencies and disagreements, something that is far from unusual in any complex and multi-faceted area of human activity.

Chapter Four

Syllabus design and ELT textbooks for adult learners: Changes, developments and trends

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of differing perspectives on the role and value of textbooks (4.2). It continues with the analysis, in terms of the syllabus design concepts that appear to underpin them, of a sample of widely used English language textbooks produced since the 1960s and designed primarily for adult learners, focusing, in particular, on one volume where a series is involved (4.3). It ends with an overview and discussion of the findings (4.4) and a concluding section (4.5).

4.2 Differing perspectives on the role and value of textbooks

Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p. 315) have referred to the ubiquity of textbooks in English language teaching, noting that millions are sold each year, and Fullan (1991, p. 70) has observed that approved textbooks often take the place of the curriculum. However, opinions differ as to the value or potential value of textbooks. Allwright (1981, pp. 6-8) argues that they are generally inflexible and reflect the preferences and biases of their authors, and Sheldon (1988, p. 239) notes that many of them make false claims and have serious design flaws and practical shortcomings. On the other hand, Harmer (1998 p. 117) notes that textbooks can give teachers ideas about what to teach and how to teach, Brewster and Ellis (2002, p. 152) observe that they can reduce a teacher's workload and Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p. 323) point out that they can help with innovation and support teachers through periods of change.

The Council of Europe and, in particular, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR: Council of Europe, 2001) has had considerable influence in the area of the teaching of additional languages, both within and beyond Europe. It is therefore relevant to refer here to its impact and/or apparent impact on textbooks. In connection with this, Beacco (2004, ¶ 13) has made the following observation:

Even though no one intends to bring textbook and curriculum designers to heel, the present 'laissez-faire' is no longer compatible with exit certifications and competence levels which have been internationally adjusted and are calibrated onto the CEFR and the Reference Level Descriptors for each language.

He adds, however, that "the calibration of certifications is in itself a difficult procedure and . . . claims of linkage to the CEFR are . . . not always substantiated". As Valax (2011, p. 71) notes:

In spite of Beacco's assertion that no one intends to bring textbook designers to heel, there is clearly considerable pressure on them to attempt to conform. Precisely how they are to achieve this is far from clear. . . .

McNamara (21 October 2006) has asserted that "[publishers] . . . know that in order to sell their books they need to conform to the framework's reporting structure" and Papageorgiou (20 October 2006) has noted that "if you are 'CEFR-aligned' you are probably going to survive", adding that "recently a paper by a Lancaster colleague at the EALTA conference showed how EFL textbooks claim linkage to the CEFR without really explaining what they mean and how they have built such a claim". In addition, Alderson (30 May 2007) has noted that there are "some worrisome claims by many textbook publishers and examination providers that their products are 'linked' to the CEFR". In connection with this, Tzagari (2006, slides 31-38) has shown just how pervasive references to the CEFR are in English language textbooks and Valax (2011, p. 70) maintains that a similar situation obtains in the case of French textbooks.

While there is no general agreement about precisely how textbooks might reflect the work of the Council of Europe (and the CEFR in particular), it is nevertheless clear that many of them, and not only those published in Europe, claim to do so. This is, therefore, something that needs to be taken into account in any consideration of textbooks that have appeared since the 1970s when the work of the Council of Europe began to be widely disseminated.

4.3 English language textbooks from the 1960s onwards: Illustrating shifting perspectives on syllabus design

4.3.1 Examples from the 1960s

The design of most widely available English language textbooks published in the 1960s was firmly rooted in a structural perspective, with individual, decontextualized clause and sentence patterns playing a central role and being introduced sequentially. Towards the end of the 1960s, however, topic-based/situational approaches were beginning to have some impact, two well-known examples being *Situational English* (The Commonwealth Office of Education, 1965) and *New Concept English* (Alexander, 1967)³⁶. The first of these is a three part series³⁷ adapted from *English for Newcomers to Australia* and published in the U.K. for the *Australian Department of Immigration*. The second is a four-part series, including *First Things First*, *Practice and Progress*, *Developing Skills* and *Fluency in English*, written by Louis Alexander (who was a member of the *Council of Europe Committee on Modern Language Teaching* from 1973 to 1978) and also published in the U.K.

4.3.1.1 *Situational English*

Ingram (2003, p. 6) has provided some useful background information concerning *Situational English*:

[Even] though it occurred in the context of turning immigrants into 'good Australians', *Australian English language education showed some progressive and, indeed, highly innovative features. . . .* At its peak, the AMEP enrolled over 100,000 students at any one time and, *to cater for the linguistically diverse classes, a new methodology was developed in which all the teaching was in English and the learners' own first language was not used. . . .* The Australian Situational Method was an analytic approach that owed much to structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology. It reduced language teaching to the teaching of small segments of language (principally short sentences) whose meanings could be conveyed

³⁶ A revised edition appeared in 1993.

³⁷ There is also a fourth book (supplementary) containing visual aids for use with the first three books.

unambiguously by constructing 'situations' and using a clever set of drawings, teaching realia and hand signs (emphasis added).

There are some aspects of *Situational English* that could be regarded as highly innovative. These include some of the hand gestures recommended for use by teachers, such as, for example, the right hand pointing over the right shoulder to represent 'he' and the right hand pointing over the left shoulder to represent 'she'. However, linguists involved in what has been referred to as the 'Reform Movement' were already developing an approach that used the target language as the medium of instruction in the late 1800s. Furthermore, the development of *Le Français Fondamental* (see, for example, Gougenheim (1958), Gougenheim, Michea, Rivenc and Sauvageot (1956 & 1964)) had already begun in the late 1940s, with *Voix et images de France* (an audio-visual course organized in terms of situations) being launched in 1961 (see *Chapter 2*). In view of this, it is difficult to see why Ingram refers to *Situational English* as involving 'a new methodology'. In fact, what it does appear to demonstrate is that the take-up of innovations may sometimes be delayed to such an extent that they eventually appear as *reinventions*. Even so, the following extract from the Teacher's Book (Part 1, pp. 3 & 4) indicates that, so far as the underlying syllabus is concerned, *Situational English* remains, as Ingram indicated, firmly structural and behaviourist in orientation:

The syllabus followed by *Situational English* is a syllabus of grammatical points - i.e., of items which function in sentence structure. . . . [Each] functional item is given a typical sentence which shows the form and meaning of the new functional item. Each of these typical sentences is called a *sentence-pattern*, or simply a *pattern*. . . . Simple functional items are introduced early in the course in simple sentence patterns, and more complex functional items and the more complex sentence patterns in which they appear are left until later. . . . A few more complex sentence-patterns are needed early in the course because they are socially useful, e.g.

- *Good evening. How are you today?*

- *Very well, thank you. How are you?*

They are taught early as formula-type sentence patterns, but only for limited use. . . . The sentence-patterns in which functional items are introduced are arranged in an order which allows each new functional item to be taught as *the only new functional item* in a sentence-pattern otherwise composed of *known* functional items. . . . [Vocabulary] items used during the teaching of new functional items should be known vocabulary items. . . . *The vocabulary items introduced in Situational English have been chosen because they are typical vocabulary commonly associated with the sentence-patterns taught* (emphasis added).

As the extract above indicates, the syllabus is largely a structural one. Thus, each unit is structurally labelled, as indicated in the partial content list from Book 1 below:

- **Unit 1:** Subject pronouns: *I, you, he, she, it*
- **Unit 5:** Demonstrative pronouns: *this, that*
- **Unit 12:** Negative statements with *be*

As is typically the case in structurally oriented syllabuses, there are also some primarily lexically focused units or unit segments:

- **Unit 18 (Part 1):** The days of the week
- **Unit 13:** Time (minutes)
- **Unit 33:** Numbers: 100 onwards

Generally, however, this lexical focus is underpinned by a structural one, as in **Unit 13** where the basic patterns (drilled) are:

What's the time please?
It's . . . past/to . . .
Is it . . . to/past . . . ?
No, it isn't . . . to/past . . . ; It's . . . to/past . . .

There *are* instances where content entries indicate primarily situational and/or topic-based content:

- **Unit 18 (Part 2):** The weather
- **Unit 36:** *Have* and *has* with ailments

Once again, however, the situational/ topical focus proves to be a vehicle for a structural presentation, as in the case of **Unit 18** where the basic sentence-patterns are:

What's today?
It's . . . / Today's . . .
Is today . . . ?
Yes, today's . . . /Yes, it's . . . No, today isn't . . . It's

Thus, what we have here is a structural syllabus focusing on individual (decontextualized) sentences or sentence pairs which is, in terms of presentation, sometimes situationalized. This situationalization is, however, both limited and, in many cases, overstated as the following extract from the Teacher's Book (Book 1, p. 2) illustrates:

For example, if we want to talk about the weather, we may use sentences such as:

It's hot today.
It's wet today.
It's sultry this afternoon.

These three sentences have the same form. *When we utter a sentence of this form, we know that we want to talk about the weather*³⁸, and we know that this is one of the forms of sentence which is appropriate in these circumstances – i.e. appropriate in this 'context of situation'.

4.3.1.2 *New Concept English*

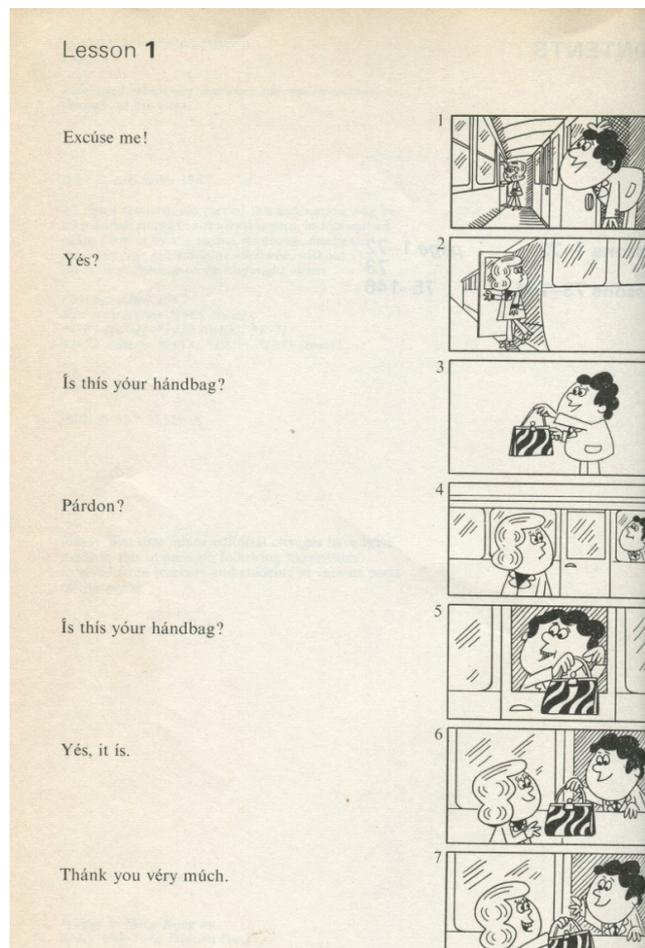
The following is an extract from the back cover of the first volume of *New Concept English (First Things First: Students' Book)*:

³⁸ An example of a sentence of a similar type that is unlikely to be used in the context of 'talk[ing] about the weather' is: *It's boring/ salty/friendly/aggressive today.*

The new concept introduced by the author . . . is particularly that of the multi-purpose text which is used as a basis for aural comprehension, oral practice, reading, oral comprehension, dictation, controlled comprehension, précis and composition practice, and written grammar exercises in recall.

New Concept English, while moving further in the direction of topic-based/situational organization than *Situational English*, often introducing several structures and formulaic functions in the same mini-dialogue (accompanied by illustrations that are often effective in conveying meaning), is nevertheless, like *Situational English*, best described, from the perspective of course organization, as being *situationalized*, as is illustrated in the following dialogue, the first that appears in the first textbook (*First Things First*, p. 1):

Figure 4.1: From *First Things First*, p. 1



In connection with the organization of content in *New Concept English*, it is interesting to consider an article written by Alexander (1976, p. 89) in which he discusses recent changes in language teaching in terms of gradual evolution rather than revolution:

In the past twenty years or so we have seen a significant move away from grammar translation methods towards the almost universal adoption of structural grading in published language courses, while audio-visual and audio-lingual techniques of presentation have become commonplace. But at grassroots level, the history of language teaching . . . must be seen in terms of slight shifts in emphasis rather than revolutionary changes. Each new development does not entirely supersede what preceded: it co-exists or is adapted in a way which allows us to see the old order in a new light. . . [It] is always bound to be imperfect and is, to some extent, dated before it is even published.

Alexander indicates (p. 93) "how the familiar idea of structural grading might be linked to a functional syllabus" with the following example:

[It] would be possible to retain a structurally graded sequence but to accrue to it, ungraded-but-systematically-related patterns. In Lesson 1, for instance, the teacher would not set out with the idea of teaching (say) the use of the verb *be* in the 1st or 2nd person singular, but with an objective like: 'Making formal and informal introductions with reference to . . . occupations'.

Such an approach would, among other things, he argued, ensure that:

- a) the grammatical common core, indispensable for all forms of communication would be systematically presented in a graded sequence, the emphasis not being on the raw grammar, but on functional aspects; and
- b) the items to be taught would be carefully selected in terms of their potential immediate and practical application (p. 94).

4.3.2 Examples from the 1970s and 1980s

By the early 1970s, the concept of situationalizing syllabuses that were essentially grammatically oriented was fully established and language functions were beginning to appear much more frequently. However, there remained, at the beginning of the 1970s, a strong focus on structural organization of the syllabus.

4.3.2.1 *Kernel Lessons*

One example of a textbook from the 1970s that is strongly focused on the structural syllabus design principle is *Kernel Lessons*, published in the U.K. (with an American edition also being made available), which is made up of four main textbooks - *Kernel One*, *Kernel Two*, *Kernel Lessons Intermediate* and *Kernel Lessons Plus*. In the case of *Kernel Lessons Intermediate*, there are 25 Units, each divided into 5 parts:

PART A (2 pages) is made up of pictures and mini-dialogues or mini-texts in which a particular construction features.

Part B (1 page), labelled *Formation and Manipulation*, focuses on pronunciation and structure.

PART C (1 page) involves episodes from a detective story and includes words that are likely to be new to the students.

PART D (1 page), labelled *Further Practice*, features exercises and a conversation that focuses on language used in everyday life, including realizations of functions such as apologising.

PART E provides an overview and summary of material presented earlier along with homework exercises and a 'guided composition' focusing on an aspect of what has been introduced earlier in the unit.

A partial contents list³⁹ for Part A is as follows:

- Present simple and position of time adverbs;
- Present continuous;

³⁹ The remainder of the contents list is: Past tense with 'Ago' and questions with 'How long ago?'; Adjectives and adverbs; Comparison of adverbs; Going to do; Requests and offers and Take/get/bring/show someone something; Present perfect with 'For' and 'Since'; Have been doing/have just done/haven't done yet/had better do; Irregular verb list.

- Simple past tense;
- Regular and irregular verbs;
- Mass and unit;
- Some, any, a few, a little.

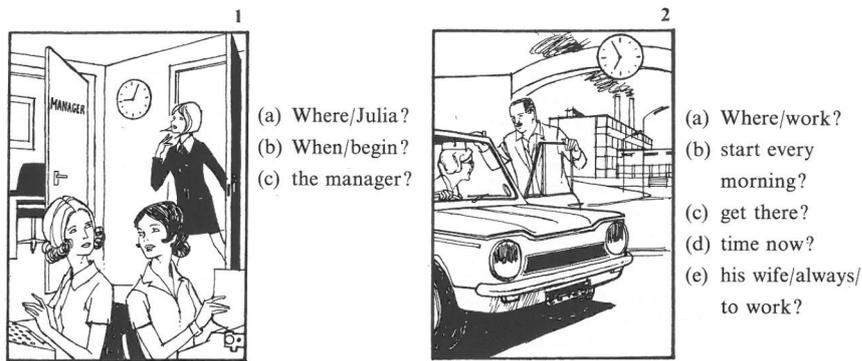
While this textbook series is largely underpinned by the structural syllabus design concept, there is clear evidence of the impact of a *situationalization and functionalization*, particularly in Parts C and D. Indeed, *Kernel One* has been described in the following terms:

Kernel One is organised around a number of characters and a story line. This story line develops gradually, and at first revolves only around the main themes of the book (eg travel, finding a place to live, getting a job etc). But towards the end it becomes an exciting kidnap plot involving all the characters in the book. Kernel One has a careful structural progression with specific communicative aims. The language presented is relevant for such operations as introducing yourself, asking where other people live and work, expressing requests, making suggestions, giving simple instructions and much more. However, the language is presented progressively, so that learners gradually acquire both insight into the structure of the language, and creative, independent control of what they want to say.

Language academy online: Kernel one (2nd. October, 2013)

To illustrate the overall approach, one that is still clearly largely structural in orientation, an extract from *Kernel Lessons Intermediate Unit 1* (present simple and position of time adverbs) is included below, beginning with situational scenarios and question prompts:

Figure 4.2: From *Kernel Lessons Intermediate Unit 1*



1
Julia Frost works in a large office. Work starts at 9 but she often gets there late. She is five minutes late today. It is 5 past 9 (9.05). Two typists are talking about her.

“Does the manager know she often comes late?”

“No, he doesn’t. He often comes late too!”

1. Ask where Julia works!
2. What does she often do?
3. Why doesn’t the manager know she often comes late?

2
Frank Martin does not work in an office. He works in a factory and he never comes late. Work starts at 7 but he always gets there early. He is five minutes early today. It is 5 to 7 (6.55). His wife always drives him to work.

1. Make sentences about Frank with these words:
a) in an office b) factory
c) late d) early
2. Ask when work starts!
3. What does his wife always do?

4.3.2.2 *Strategies*

An early example of an attempt to base the design of a textbook syllabus on functional criteria is the original *Strategies* series, of which the first two volumes were published in the 1970s (Abbs & Freebairn, 1977 & 1979). Preceding the publication of the *Strategies* series was a free-standing textbook (Abbs, Ayton & Freebairn, 1975a). In the Teacher's Book (Abbs, Ayton & Freebairn, 1995b, p. iv), following an outline of some criticisms that had been made of grammatical syllabuses, the authors outline their own approach:

The approach we have taken in this book is . . . *functional rather than structural*. What we have tried to do is present a syllabus in such a way that the student will see the immediate practical application of what he (sic) is learning *while covering the more important structures of the language in a graded sequence*. The learner is taught strategies for handling particular *language functions such as identifying people and places, expressing personal tastes, emotions, moods and opinions, giving information, making suggestions, giving advice and so on*. *The structural contents have been selected as being appropriate to the particular*

*function*⁴⁰ rather than as an unrelated series of structures arranged in order of supposed linguistic difficulty. The student does not practice and use grammatical items in isolation, but is shown how to exploit them for different functional purposes. . . . [These] *structures have been limited to those which are considered to be most suited to the linguistic level of the learner* (emphasis added). (p. iv)

As noted by Breen (1987a, p. 90), even Van Ek, "a central contributor to the development of the Functional syllabus - abandons notional subdivision in favour of a framework of pre-selected topics or themes which 'carry' a Functional syllabus". This tendency is also in evidence in *Strategies*, where the omission of notions (which include meanings that can be conveyed structurally) results in considerable uncertainty about the role of structure. While it is claimed that structures are not 'arranged in order of supposed linguistic difficulty', it is also claimed that 'the most important structures' are covered 'in a graded sequence' and are those which are '*considered* to be most suited to the linguistic level of the learner'. There is also some indication in the extract above that the concept of 'linguistic function' may have been extended in such a way as to include almost any aspect of meaning that can be conveyed through language (e.g. personal tastes and emotions). This impression is reinforced by a consideration of the contents lists. Thus, for example, in *Starting Strategies*, the contents list (pp. 5 & 6) includes a curious combination of functional (see first two examples below), topic-based/ situational (see third and fourth examples below) and lexically-oriented (see fifth and sixth examples below) specification. The fact that functions are *not* always central is masked, to some extent, by the inclusion of 'ask', 'say' and 'talk about'. There is sometimes also what is clearly a *primarily* structural focus (see seventh example below).

- 1) Greet people formally and introduce yourself
- 2) Agree to do things

- 3) Talk about the weather

⁴⁰ An example provided is the use of the second conditional in the context of criticism and the making of hypotheses.

- 4) Ask and talk about nationality
- 5) Ask and say what somebody's job is
- 6) Ask what people like and say what you like
- 7) Ask and talk about the past

Because functional specification relies on the interaction between text and context, illustrations (which provide context) can play a critical role. Whereas in *New Concept English*, the illustrations are generally very successful in conveying meaning, they are often somewhat less so in the *Strategies* series, as indicated in the following extract from *Starting Strategies* (1977, p. 108):

Figure 4.3: From *Starting Strategies*, p. 108

Focus on people at work

UNIT 19

1 Meet Walter Moaney. Walter is an engineer. He works for Ford in a factory in Coventry.

2 Here is a typical day for Walter. He gets up at 7 o'clock and has breakfast.

3 Then he goes to work. He goes to work by bus. He starts work at 8 o'clock.

4 He usually has lunch in the factory canteen.

5 He finishes work at 5.30. Then he goes home and has supper.

6 After supper he usually reads the paper and watches television.

7 He sometimes goes out to the pub and has a pint of beer.

8 He goes to bed at about 10.30.

9 Walter lives in a small house in Coventry. He's married with four children.

10 He and his wife are Irish. They like Coventry but they prefer Ireland. Walter says: "I like my job here but Ireland is my home".

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4.3.2.3 *Main course English*

Appearing in the late 1970s was another series that attempted to prioritize functional classification of content - *Main Course English*, a three volume series (made up of *Encounters*, *Exchanges* and *Advances*), the first volume of which was published in 1979 (Garton-Sprenger, Jupp & Prowse, 1979). The syllabus is described in the Teachers' Book accompanying that volume in the following terms (pp. 1 & 2):

Traditionally language syllabuses have been based *primarily* on a list of language forms or structures. We consider that the language functions or the purpose to which the language will be put in communication should be chosen *first*, and the linguistic content, the structures, should be finalized at the *second* stage. In this way the learner practises and is made aware of the way English is used from the outset of a course as well as building up a systematic understanding and mastery of language forms.

However, the function of any piece of language . . . can only be decided by examining the context or situation in which it is used Therefore, each piece of language has to be presented initially in its context and as part of a larger piece of communication so that the learner can grasp its function. . . .

We have had to take account of these factors in the design of the syllabus, which is based upon the following:

Contexts and situations

These have been chosen to reflect the three themes [talking about yourself as an individual; talking about physical surroundings; interaction between the individual and the environment] . . .

The language functions

These have been chosen because they arise in the situations outlined above. Other functions have been chosen for immediate use in the

classroom itself . . . The particular examples of the functions have been selected on the basis of the range of use and of linguistic simplicity and structural grading. . . .

The language forms

The structural syllabus of the course has arisen from the examples of the language functions. . . .

What is particularly interesting about this account is (a) the recognition of the role of context in functional specification (with, however, no explicit recognition of the fact that functions may co-occur), and (b) the attempt to integrate topic-based/situational, functional and structural factors in the design of the syllabus. A review of the actual content, however, indicates that functional specification is not as pervasive as the introduction suggests. In addition to 'maxi-functions' (e.g. questioning, informing, and instructing) and genres (e.g. describing; explaining; instructing; narrating),⁴¹ the functions that appear in the 10 units (70 lessons) are very limited in number and are *largely formulaic* (see first group below) or *very general ones which apply in a wide range of contexts* (see second group below), with *occasional more open-ended ones* (see third group below):

apologising; congratulating; excusing; giving directions; greeting;
introducing; inviting; suggesting; thanking

accepting and refusing; agreeing and disagreeing; offering; requesting

advising; comparing; complaining; expressing opinions; permitting.

Headings that combine 'maxi-functions' (with topics) and structural indicators (e.g. *Asking and explaining about personal past history*) give the impression of a greater degree of functional orientation than is actually the case.

⁴¹ Note that genres may be associated with a range of functions. Here 'genres' appear to relate to what are termed *macro-functions* in the CEFR.

The approach adopted in *Main Course English* represents the type of accommodation of structural, functional and topic-based/ situational syllabus design perspectives that was to become the norm throughout the 1980s and beyond.

4.3.2.4 *Network*

Even in the 1980s, a tendency to prioritize structural progression while *appearing* to place major emphasis on functional (or notional-functional) orientation is evident in a number of textbooks, including *Network*, a three part series intended for adolescents and young adults that was developed in the early 1980s in collaboration with *BBC English by Radio and Television*. It includes a story line that focuses on the working lives of people employed by a fictitious radio station in the south of England (*Radio Rainbow*). Each unit has three parts (*Communication and grammar*; *Story and exercises*; and *Activities*). The Teacher's Book relating to *Network 1* (Eastwood, Kay, Mackin & Strevens, 1980) includes the following comment with reference to the first of these sections:

The purpose of this section is to present the *new grammatical structures, notions and communicative functions in everyday situations* which make clear the meaning of the new language. Some new vocabulary is also introduced in this section. . . .

This comment would appear to indicate that the authors do not think of notions as encompassing grammatical structures (i.e. as including the semantic labelling of meanings that can be structurally conveyed), an inference that is supported by the actual labelling within learning units. Thus, for example, the content of Unit 3, Book 1 is listed as follows, a listing which (notwithstanding the initial heading) suggests that the course syllabus is, in reality, largely organized along the lines of a fairly traditional structural syllabus:

Unit 3: What's your favourite programme?

- A1 Negative sentences
- A2 Questions about place (*Where . . . ?*)

- A3 Questions about things (*What . . . ?*)
- A4 Questions about people (*Who . . . ?*)
- A5 Questions about reasons (*Why . . . ?/ Why not . . . ?*)
- A6 Possession (*my, your, his, her*)
- A7 Possession (*our, their*)
- A8 Apologizing, thanking
- A9 Talking about likes (*I like, he/she likes . . .*)
- A10 Possession (*have*)
- A11 Orders

Network 1: Teachers' Book, p. 5.

Thus, while the authors are at pains to be seen to accommodate a notional-functional perspective and to align themselves with the work of the Council of Europe, they nevertheless indicate that 'for reasons of methodology', a decision was made 'not to neglect grammatical structures' (which appears to be predicated on the assumption that a fully notional-functional orientation would normally involve the neglect of structures, something that is indicative of a general tendency to overlook the fact that syntactic structures can be directly associated with notions):

We have attempted to combine on the one hand the best of conventional British *methodology* in the tradition of Palmer, Hornby, West, etc., and on the other hand more recent exciting developments in notional, functional and communicative teaching of English. We are fully aware of the work leading to the Council of Europe *Waystage* and *Threshold Level* and right from the start we decided that the notions and functions included in the T-level should be covered in this course. At the same time we decided *for reasons of methodology* not to make notions and functions the dominant feature and particularly not to neglect grammatical structures. . . .

Network 1: Teachers' Book, p. 9.

It is interesting to note that although the authors use the word 'methodology' in the extract above, they do not make any direct reference to 'syllabus', preferring to refer to course content indirectly: "*Network covers* the basic grammatical

structures and communicative functions of English" (*Network 1: Teachers' Book*, p. 9) (emphasis added). It is, however, not only in relation to course content but also in relation to methodology that *Network* plays a careful balancing act, as the following extract illustrates:

Of course, drills and exercises cannot be dispensed with, since it is necessary for students to internalize the patterns of the language through systematic practice before they can speak naturally and fluently. . . . We feel strongly, however, that students should be provided with a more open-ended kind of material which encourages them to communicate more meaningfully rather than giving a fixed response to a stimulus. . . . (*Network 1: Teacher's Book*, p.12).

Overall, while the authors of *Network* were keen to present the work as being aligned to that of the Council of Europe and, in particular, as being influenced by notional-functional considerations, and while there is some evidence of situationalization, the syllabus underpinning the series appears to be largely structural, with concessions to other approaches being largely cosmetic and with no evidence that research in the area of discourse analysis that had taken place in the previous decade had had any real impact.

4.3.2.5 *Reading and Thinking in English, The Collins COBUILD English Course and Listen for it*

Although not yet evident in most general English textbooks, by the end of the 1970s, the impact of discourse analysis and of developments in corpus-based research (particularly in the area of lexis and lexical chunking) and task-based learning began to be detectable in some English language textbooks. Some notable examples are *Reading and Thinking in English* (The British Council, 1979a & b; 1980a & b), a four volume reading comprehension course (whose last two volumes are entitled *Discovering discourse* and *Discourse in action*), *The Collins COBUILD English Course* (Willis & Willis, 1989) and *Listen for it: A Task-based Listening Course* (Richards, Gordon & Harper, 1987).

Reading and thinking in English is difficult to place in relation to the texts considered in this chapter. It does not fit comfortably into either the GE or EAP categories and is, in many ways, ahead of its time in terms of syllabus content. In the third volume, the emphasis, in addition to reading strategies, such as predicting, is on *generalization, description, definition, classification* and *hypothesis-formation*. In the fourth volume, in addition to providing advice about using textbooks and other sources, the emphasis is on *exposition* (including explanation), *enquiry* (including testing hypotheses) and *argument* (including attacking and defending a position). Thus, we see in this series the beginning of that focus on discourse features that was beginning to become a major focus of research in the area of discourse analysis (see, for example, Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

The Collins COBUILD⁴² English Course was promoted as having a lexical syllabus that focuses on every-day English and, in particular, on those words that were found, in the corpus-based⁴³ research underpinning the production of the *COBUILD* [Collins Birmingham University International Language Database] *English Language Dictionary* (1987)⁴⁴, to occur most frequently (700 words) and/or to be among those that made up 80% of the corpus (2,500 words). *Book 1* centres on the 700 most frequent words; *Book 2* covers a further 850 words. Interestingly, while the promotional material stresses that the syllabus is a lexical one, one of its authors has claimed that it is "probably the first task-based course book"(Teaching Englishonline: Dave Willis (last visited 8 October 2013)). What this suggests is that what we actually have here is a combined lexical and task-based syllabus. In fact, Long and Crookes (1993, p. 23) have claimed that this series "utilise[s] one of the more complex hybrid syllabi in current ESL texts".

The *Collins COBUILD English Course* focuses on spoken language and includes, in its transcripts, many of those features which characterize spontaneous

⁴² COBUILD = Collins Birmingham University International Language Database.

⁴³ The Collins Corpus of English includes over 4.5 billion words taken from websites, newspapers, magazines and books published all over the world, and spoken material from radio and TV and everyday conversations.

⁴⁴ Several other dictionaries followed, including Collins COBUILD Intermediate Dictionary (1991) and Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of English (1994).

conversation, such as hesitations, fillers (e.g. *er; erm, sort of*), frequent ellipsis (e.g. *I tend to walk from there, yes. Trying to get fit*), signals that an addressee is listening/ engaged (e.g. *mm; right*), changes of grammatical direction (e.g. *It's - I really enjoyed it there actually*), and sub-vocal elements (e.g. *I am now trying to . . .*). (Examples from *Book 3, Unit 1, Transcript 1*). Many of the tasks, while being topically related to taped conversational interactions in a general sense, are not predicated on the expectation/ assumption that the students will necessarily use the language included in the texts, although they may do so. Thus, for example, following a taped conversational interaction in which two people meeting for the first time discover that they are familiar with the same general area of south east London, students are asked to do the following:

Either - find two people whose home and family circumstances *are similar to yours* (for example, someone who has *the same* number of brothers and sisters or children *as you*).

Or - find two people who have *the same* reasons for wanting to learn English *as you* do.

Find what other things they have *in common*. Plan what to say, then introduce your group to the class.

Collins COBUILD English Course, Student's Book 3, p. 5
(emphasis added).

Following this task, a variety of words and expressions relating to similarity are used (e.g. *similar to; the most similar; the same . . . (as); in common*), including those that were included in the introduction to the task. Thus, the expectation would appear to be that students, whether or not they use these words in carrying out the task, will gradually assimilate them through progressive exposure.

In each Unit, there are 'language study', 'grammar' and 'lexical'/ dictionary skills' sections. These do not focus on all aspects of the language introduced in the texts but, rather, select particular aspects of that language for primary focus. Thus, for example, in *Book 3, Unit 1*, following a variety of texts that include a wide range of grammatical, lexical and discourse features, students are encouraged to focus

on: the use of the definite article (*a/an*) and cleft sentences (e.g. *It was . . . who/that . . .*) (Grammar section); a number of words used in the texts, some of which have, for example, the same form in the singular and plural (e.g. *series*) or are used as generics (e.g. *stuff*) (Dictionary skills section); and the relationship between *situation* and *comment* (Language study section). Sometimes - as in the case of the *Language Study* section of *Book 3, Unit 1*, in which the focus is on what is referred to as 'Situation - comment' - distinctions which would generally be considered to be of considerable significance (e.g. the distinction between *reason* and *concession*) are conflated. Thus, *situation* and *comment* are described as follows:

SITUATION

What are the facts?

What is the situation?

COMMENT

What do you think of them?

What opinion is expressed about it?

The examples provided, however, include 'comments' that are very different in type, such as those listed below:

EL: I'm quite lucky. I work at home.

BB: On the coast. So it's quite a nice area.

BB: That's me, obviously, and my wife, standing in front of our semi-detached box. As you can see it's fairly conventional stuff . . .

EL: I'm just concentrating on playing . . . six hours a day. that kind of thing . . . But getting yourself established is pretty difficult.

BB: As you can see, it's quite a decent-sized bush now.

RD: Very nice photo.

Each unit includes a review that focuses on, for example, new words, and word class and word formation, with grammatical information / explanation often being very general and/or wholly inferential, as in the following example:

d To

Which sentences refer to the past?

- a *Oh yeah. I used to live near there.*
- b *. . . and I tend to walk away from there . . .*
- c *I used to be a school teacher . . .*
- d *. . . maybe that had something to do with it.*
- e *We decided to have the photo out there . . .*
- f *It's quite a nice area to be.*
- g *. . . if you've time to spend . . .*

Book 3, Unit 1, p. 8 (Review section).

While it may be true, as Long and Crookes (1993, p. 23) have claimed, that this series "utilise[s] one of the more complex hybrid syllabi in current ESL texts", some learners may find the end result to be somewhat confusing. The selection of language points for focus often appears to be somewhat idiosyncratic; the information provided sometimes appears to involve the conflation of critical differences; there is an absence of any clear explanation of some fundamental grammatical points; and, finally, there is likely to be considerable difficulty involved in any attempt to systematize the many informational snippets provided. This may be the reason why this series has not reappeared in a recent version.

Listen for It: A Task-Based Listening Course was produced by Oxford University Press in 1987. The *Introduction* includes the following:

Listen for It is an intensive course in listening skills for lower intermediate to intermediate level students. It is intended for upper secondary school students, young adults, and others who have studied some English but who lack the ability to follow conversational American English on everyday topics. The focus . . . is on listening for meaning. This often requires the listener to determine his or her own or the speaker's purpose and to focus only on those parts of a conversation that are important for that purpose. . .

Each of the seventeen units . . . is organized around a topic and related functions. The exercises . . . are designed to prepare the listener . . . by establishing background knowledge, by setting purpose for listening, and by showing the learner how conversational language is used to express meaning. Follow-up speaking activities are also suggested. Each unit contains the following sections:

Starting out: introduces a topic and provides some of the background information and language that is needed in order to understand conversations on that topic.

Listening for it: contains several task-based listening activities . . .

Listening tactics: focuses on how conversational language expresses meaning.

Trying it out: contains follow-up speaking activities.

Listen for It: Student's Book, p. iii.

Sample content specifications for some of the units are provided below:

1 WHAT DO YOU DO?

Topic: Jobs

Function: Describing a job

Tactic: Remembering and writing names and numbers

2 IT'S IN THE BAG

Topic: Location of objects

Function: Describing where things are located

Tactic: Recognizing prepositions in rapid speech;
Distinguishing sentence and question intonation

The 'functions' may, be very general (e.g. *talking about/to; discussing*), genre-related (e.g. *describing; narrating*) or, in some cases, more specific (e.g. *comparing; asking for and giving medical advice*). The 'tactics' are of various kinds, including, for example, some which are primarily structurally oriented (e.g.

distinguishing Wh and Yes/No questions; distinguishing positive and negative questions/ statements), some which are primarily supra-segmental in focus (e.g. *identifying meaning from intonation*), some which are primarily lexically focused (e.g. *remembering and writing names and numbers*), and some which are primarily discourse-focused (e.g. *listening for sequence markers*).

While many of the tasks are of a kind that had, by the 1980s, become fairly standard in general textbooks (e.g. listening for words that identify the location of objects and ticking a picture that accurately represents that location), a few are more original (e.g. identifying cases where what may appear to be invitations (*We should have lunch together sometime*) are actually conversational closures. Overall, however, there appears to be little difference between a textbook of this kind (which is described as being 'task-based') and textbooks whose language is organized in terms of a combination of structural, lexical, discursal and phonological criteria presented in situations (situationalized) and includes a wide range of tasks relating to the language included in texts (task supported).

4.3.3 Examples from the 1990s onwards

By the beginning of the 1990s, most of the syllabus design proposals, such as the lexical, notional-functional and situational syllabus proposals, had been trialled by commercial publishers. In the area of general English courses, the concept of a hybrid syllabus in which the primary focus was on vocabulary, language structures (often semantically labelled), functions and discourse features (generally organized in relation to topics and/or situations) was becoming the norm, often integrated with an increased focus on language skills and sub-skills and on learning skills. An increasingly wide variety of task types was providing for practice, integration of new and existing language knowledge and personalization of learning. In the case of specific purposes courses, particularly in the case of courses with various types of academic focus designed for intermediate and post-intermediate learners (where the emphasis was/is often primarily on contextualized language practice), a greater variety of syllabus design principles has been in evidence.

4.3.3.1 General English textbooks

Typical examples of widely used general English textbook series are *New Headway*⁴⁵ (Soars & Soars, 1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003), *Landmark*⁴⁶ (Haines & Stewart, 2000a, 2000b), *New Cutting Edge*⁴⁷ (Moor & Cunningham, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2010) and *Touchstone*⁴⁸ (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford (with Sue Aldcorn, Janet K. Battiste, Andrew Gitzy, Eiza Jensen and Tay Esley), 2005a, 2005b, 2006a & 2006b).

4.3.3.1.1 *New Headway*

In relation to *New Headway Intermediate*, the following two statements both appear in the publisher's publicity material:

The world's best-selling English course - *a perfectly-balanced syllabus with a strong grammar focus*, and full support at all six levels.

The *strong grammar focus, clear vocabulary syllabus* and integrated skills work give you lessons that really work in class.

ELT online catalogue (visited 8 October, 2013).

It would therefore appear that the primary syllabus focus is lexical and grammatical. A review of the contents list for the Intermediate book confirms that this is largely the case. Each unit has a topic-based title (e.g. *What a wonderful world!*; *Relationships*) followed by the following headings:

Grammar; Vocabulary; Postscript; Reading; Speaking; Listening; Writing

The topic provides the context in which the main language focus points are introduced, providing for their situationalization. Otherwise, the grammar points

⁴⁵ Available at *Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate* and *Advanced* levels. Also available are: *Headway academic skills: 1 Reading, writing and study skills (2011)*, *Headway academic skills: 2 Reading, writing and study skills (2011)* and *Headway academic skills: 3 Listening, speaking and study skills (2011)* and *Headway academic skills IELTS study skills edition (2013)*.

⁴⁶ Available at *Intermediate* and *Upper Intermediate* levels.

⁴⁷ Available at *Starter, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate*, and *Advanced* levels

⁴⁸ Available at four levels: *Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4*.

appear to be introduced/ organized in a way that is not substantially different from the way in which they would be likely to be organized in a traditional grammatical syllabus. Thus, for example, the grammar content for the first six units is specified as follows:

Unit 1: Auxiliary verbs (*do, be, have*); Naming the tenses; Questions and negatives; Short answers

Unit 2: Present time (Present Simple and Continuous); Action and state verbs (*walk; know*); Present passive

Unit 3: Past time (Past Simple and Continuous; Past Simple and Past Perfect; Past passive)

Unit 4: Modal verbs 1 (Obligation and permission (*can; have to; allowed to; must; mustn't; should*))

Unit 5: Future forms (*going to* and *will*); Present Continuous

Unit 6: Questions with like (*Do you like tea? What's she like?*)⁴⁹; Verb patterns (*want to do; enjoy meeting*)⁵⁰.

Under the heading of *Vocabulary*, there is a rather curious combination of different types of focus point (including, for example, topic; collocation; word formation; function, part of speech; spelling and pronunciation). Some examples of entries under the heading of *Vocabulary* are provided below⁵¹:

Unit 1: Sounds and spelling (*meat (i:); great (ei)*); silent letters (*knee (ni:)*)

Unit 2: Sports and leisure activities (*play tennis; go swimming; do aerobics*)

Unit 3: Art, music and literature (*chapter; orchestra*); Verbs and nouns that go together (*paint a portrait*)

⁴⁹ A curious combination of two very different senses of 'like'.

⁵⁰ Structures and structure-related meanings are reviewed in a 'grammar reference' section at the back of the book.

⁵¹ Each of the units has an explicit focus on vocabulary with a total of 18 exercises across the 12 units. In the 18 exercises, 7 of the exercises cover parts of speech (e.g., identifying adjective, nouns etc.), 2 of the exercises relate to spelling and pronunciation of the words (phonology), 5 of the exercises relate to word formation (structures when changing from one part of speech to another) and 5 of the exercises cover mainly meanings (dictionary work). The vocabulary exercises are mainly related to the topic of the unit – 15 of the vocabulary exercises are directly related to the topic of the unit and 4 of the exercises seem to be unrelated.

Unit 4: Adjectives that describe people (*punctual; friendly*); Word formation (*behave - behaviour; stranger – strange*)

Unit 5: The weather (*storm; shower; chilly; freezing*)

Unit 6: Words that go together (*tall people; historic town; rich food*)

Under the heading of *Postscript*, there is further eclecticism. This time, the focus points may relate to functions (e.g. *giving opinions; making suggestions; complaining*), levels of formality; formulaic chunks/collocations (headed 'social expressions' or 'signs and soundbites') or lexical groupings (e.g. money; dates). Some examples are provided below:

Unit 1: Social expressions (*Never mind!; It's my round; You must be joking?*)

Unit 2: Numbers; Money; fractions, decimals; percentages; phone numbers; dates

Unit 3: Giving opinions (*What did you think of the play? It was boring.*)

Unit 6: Signs and soundbites (*Dry clean only; I'm just looking, thank you.*)

Under the headings of *Reading and Listening*, there are no indications of a reading skills or listening skills syllabus component. Instead, what we have is a list of text titles, such as:

Reading

Unit 1: Wonders of the modern world

Unit 9: The man who planted trees

Listening

Unit 2: Three people talk about their favourite sport or leisure activity

Unit 7: Thomas Wilson - a retired man talks to his granddaughter about his life

Under the heading of *Speaking*, the classification may relate to a type of speaking activity (e.g. *discussion; class survey; roleplay; guessing game*) and/ or a topic (e.g. *Talking about your favourite poem, piece of music, or painting*). Under the

heading of *Writing*, the focus may be on text-type (e.g. *formal letters; filling in a form*), genre (e.g. writing a narrative), error correction (e.g. *correcting language mistakes in an informal letter*), cohesion (e.g. *Linking devices and comment adverbs in an informal letter*) and/or lexical/grammatical selection (e.g. Adverbs of degree (*quite young; rather attractive*)); Relative pronouns (*who, which, that, where, whose*).

While attempting to accommodate a wide range of different perspectives on language syllabus design, the authors of the *New Headway* series, as exemplified in *New Headway Intermediate* - promoted as "[the] world's bestselling English course" (ELT online catalogue) – appear to have paid little attention to the theoretical underpinnings of any of them or to the nature of the discussion and debate that has surrounded them. There is, for example, no evidence that careful consideration has been paid to frequency or utility in the selection of vocabulary; while some functions (all unitary ones) are included, they seem to be presented as add-ons, bearing no detectable relationship to the main theme of the unit in which they appear (and therefore playing no role in demonstrating use/s of the grammar points in focus); where language focus points are labelled, that labelling is primarily grammatical rather than notional/semantic; cohesion appears only sporadically and always in writing sections (with two of the units (8 and 10) including words that may signal chronological sequence: *when, as soon as, since* and *until*). There is little variety in terms of genres and text-types, with, for example, 17 of the 21 main reading texts focusing on recount and nine of the eleven writing tasks doing so⁵². The effect of all of this is that the syllabus appears disjointed, even haphazard, the various components even within single units (grammar, vocabulary, postscript, reading, writing, listening and speaking) sometimes appearing to bear little other than a broadly thematic relationship with one another. In fact, there is not always a clear connection between the unit topic and the unit content. For example, the topic for Unit 2 is *Happiness*. The first and

⁵² The reading tasks that focus on recount include, in terms of text-types, as 15 articles (5 of which are newspaper articles), 1 fairy tale and 1 magazine problem page entry. There are also two reading tasks that focus on discussion/ argument and 1 that focuses on explanation. In terms of text-types, of the 9 writing tasks that focus on recount, there are 6 letters, 1 fax, 1 form and 1 article. Also included in the writing tasks is 1 that focuses on description/ classification (a short article) and 1 that focuses on discussion/ argument.

main reading text, entitled *The happiest person in Britain*, does relate to it. However, in the grammar exercises (focusing on *present simple and present continuous (active and passive)*), the example sentences are not related to the topic (see extract below):

3 Complete the following pairs of sentences using the verb in italics. Use the Present Simple for one and the Present Continuous for the other.

a come

Alec and Mary are Scottish. They _____ from Glasgow.

They'll be here soon. They _____ by car.

b have

Lisa can't answer the phone. She _____ a bath.

She _____ two pairs of jeans.

c think

I _____ that all politicians tell lies.

I _____ about my girlfriend. She's in New York at the moment. Soars & Soars, 1996, p.19.

4.3.3.1.2 **Landmark**

In terms of syllabus design, the *Landmark* series is similar in many ways to *New Headway*. In *Landmark Upper Intermediate* (Haines & Stewart, 2000), the content of each unit is divided into five sections:

Preview; Listening; Reading; Vocabulary; Language in action (including a *Writing* section)

Sometimes *Listening* precedes *Reading*; sometimes the order is inverted. Language indicators appear in the first three sections in blue print, sometimes structurally labelled (e.g. *Relative clauses; Future continuous and Future perfect*), sometimes lexically labelled (e.g. *used to; would*), sometimes semantically labelled (e.g. *ability and inability*), and sometimes with labelling that combines structural and semantic information (e.g. Modal verbs: *prohibition/ no obligation*). The *Language in action* sections are generally functionally labelled (e.g. *Agreeing*

and disagreeing; Making suggestions, Accepting, and rejecting suggestions). The *Vocabulary* sections have a range of different types of focus. For example:

Unit 1: Collocations; Confusing pairs

Unit 2: Using a dictionary; Adjectives describing feelings

Unit 4: Word-building: Suffixes

Unit 5: Learning new vocabulary: Vague language

Unit 6: Homonyms; Euphemisms

While a particular language focus point may characterize both the *Preview* section and the section that follows it (either *Reading* or *Listening*), the language focus generally shifts in later sections as does the topic focus, as illustrated in the content list for Unit 7:

Table 4.1: Content list - Landmark Upper Intermediate, Unit 7

Unit 7: Survival				
Preview	Listening	Reading	Vocabulary	Language in action
Reading: Aborigines <i>can, could, be able to</i> review Weak forms	Personal survival stories Ability and inability	One of the world's greenest cities? Articles	Connotations Distinctions between verbs	Persuading/ advising someone not to do something Making generalizations The use of <i>you know</i> Unfinished statements Writing: Radio scripts

The emphasis in this series appears to be a combination of a 'focus on forms' and a 'focus on form'/'noticing'. The fact that the emphasis in sections dealing specifically with language is largely structural in orientation is exemplified by the following account of aspect in which only constructionally-inherent aspect is recognised^{53,54}:

⁵³ Lexically-inherent aspect (e.g. *glance* (non-durative); *stare* (durative)) and combinatorial aspect (e.g. *He ate at ten o'clock/ for an hour* (non-durative; durative) are not treated as such at any point in the *Landmark* series.

⁵⁴ *Tense* and *constructionally-inherent aspects* are dealt with in 24 sub-sections of the units, *question tags* in one unit and *reported speech* in two.

Aspect describes the way we think about the action of a verb. There are two aspects in English: the continuous (or progressive) aspect and the perfect aspect.

There is, however, also considerable emphasis on structure-related meanings as in the case of exercises that focus on, for example, the difference, between *an action or event that took place over a period of time in the past* and *a completed action or event which took place at one or more particular times in the past* (Unit 2, p. 15).

There appears to be some attempt to take account of meaning relations. Thus, for example, in Unit 3, under the heading of *Language in Action*, there is a section dealing with *Asking for and giving reasons* where, although the conjunct 'so' occurs, the emphasis is on implicit reasons. Also in this unit, under the heading of *Reading*, there is a section dealing with 'the language of contrast' in which the content lists 'but', 'however' and 'although', but in which a range of additional contrastive indicators (e.g. 'rather than' and 'opposite') as well as comparative adjectives are also highlighted. It is relevant to note here that in spite of the inclusion of 'although', no clear distinction is made between general contrast and concession. In Unit 9, there is an exercise involving the insertion of either chronological sequence markers (referred to as 'time expressions' and including 'when' and 'eventually') and markers of reason (e.g. 'because' and 'as') as well as a section under *Listening*, headed *Cause and effect*, in which the emphasis is on causative verbs (e.g. 'cause', 'bring about', 'result in'), including 'make' as the dual agentive causative (e.g. 'make someone do something').

So far as genre is concerned, the primary emphasis is, in the reading sections, on recount/narrative and description/classification, with 15 of the 29 reading texts being in recount/ narrative mode and 12 being in description/ classification mode (the remaining two involving discussion/ argument). The writing tasks are, however, more varied, with, of the 16 main writing tasks, six involving discussion/ argument, four involving recount/ narrative, three involving description/classification, one involving explanation, and two combining

recount/narrative and discussion/argument. In terms of text-type, almost all of the reading texts are articles (including newspaper and magazine articles). There is no instructional focus on the overall rhetorical structuring of texts although aspects of their internal structure are highlighted. The vocabulary occurring in the texts in each unit is not pre-taught but introduced in relation to its topic relevance.

The authors draw attention to specific linguistic forms which appear in the texts, but these forms are by no means always more frequently occurring, more structurally complex or more semantically nuanced than other forms that also occur in the texts. Presumably, therefore, the intention is that while some aspects of the language are highlighted for particular attention (focus on forms), other aspects may also be drawn to the attention of the students by the teacher or receive focus in response to student interest/query/ concern. This seems to be a high risk strategy, particularly in the case of a textbook that is likely to be used by a wide range of teachers, including some who lack effective training and/or a high level of proficiency and/or understanding of the grammatical structure of English and the rhetorical structure of English texts.

4.3.3.1.3 *New Cutting Edge*

New Cutting Edge (Moor & Cunningham⁵⁵, 2005) is an extended version of the earlier *Cutting Edge* series. The series is available at *Starter*, *Elementary*, *Pre-Intermediate*, *Intermediate*, *Upper Intermediate* and *Advanced* levels. The publicity material notes that this series "combines a comprehensive syllabus with reliable teaching resources". It is also noted that each level features:

- A comprehensive syllabus with thorough grammar, vocabulary and skills work; and
- Systematic vocabulary building which focuses on high-frequency, useful words and phrases.

Pearson Longman online: *New cutting edge* (visited 8 October 2013).

⁵⁵ Jane Comyns-Carr is among the authors of some of the textbooks.

In *New Cutting Edge Intermediate*, the content of each of the twelve modules is divided into six categories, each preceded by a module topic (e.g. *All about you; Memory; Around the world*):

Language focus; Vocabulary; Reading/Listening; Task; Further skills; Study/ Practice/ Remember

Two examples are provided in *Table 4.2* following:

Table 4.2: *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* - Examples of module contents as indicated in the textbook

Module 7						
Topic	Language focus	Vocabulary	Reading/ Listening	Task	Further skills	Study/ Practice/ Remember
Socialising	1. Polite requests <i>Pronunciation: Sounding polite</i> 2. will for offers and instant decisions <i>Pronunciation: 'll</i> 3. Making generalisations	Vocabulary and speaking: Social behaviour Wordspot: <i>go</i>	Reading and vocabulary: <i>The great international night out</i> Listening: Social customs in Thailand	Task: Give tips on how to behave <i>Preparation: listening</i> Task: speaking	Real life: Making a social arrangement	Study tip: Using revision techniques <i>Pronunciation spot: The sounds / θ/ and /ð/</i>
Module 11						
Topic	Language focus	Vocabulary	Reading/ Listening	Task	Further skills	Study/ Practice/ Remember
Rules and freedom	1. Obligation and permission in the present <i>Pronunciation: Modal verbs</i> 2. Obligation and permission in the past	Wordspot: <i>do</i>	Listening: Annoying rules Reading and vocabulary: <i>To sue or not to sue?</i>	Task: Present your opinions <i>Preparation: vocabulary</i> Task: speaking	Writing: Linking words	Study tip: Checking your written work <i>Pronunciation spot: Review</i>

The language focus points, where they are not related to pronunciation, are generally semantically labelled (e.g. *Hypothetical possibilities with 'if'* in Module 9) and the language that is introduced is situationalized. There is a clear grammatical focus in each module, with, for example, Module 1 focusing on the present simple and present continuous and the use of auxiliary verbs in questions. Sixteen (16) exercises focus on clause and sentence structure, 12 on tense/ aspect and 2 on question forms. A typical exercise in which students are encouraged to link form and meaning is provided below:

1. Underline the Present simple verbs in exercise 2 like this _____, and Present continuous verbs like this _____.
2. Match the examples in A with the explanations in B.

A	B
They're looking at photos.	A habit
She stays with us every weekend.	An action happening at the moment
She lives upstairs.	A permanent situation
He's staying with his aunt.	A changing situation
Holly looks like Karina.	A temporary situation
He's getting really tall.	A 'state'

3. Verbs that describe states are not in the continuous form. Find more examples of 'state' verbs in exercise 2 on page 10.

Cunningham and Moor, 2005, p. 11.

The vocabulary is topic-related. Of the 38 exercises that focus on vocabulary development, 36 relate directly to reading texts, with 24 focusing on meaning (including references to a mini-dictionary included in a pouch attached to the back cover of the book), 12 on spelling and pronunciation, one on word formation and one on parts of speech.

Most of the modules in *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* focus on discrete grammar points. Even in cases where there is the potential to extend the focus beyond the sentence, this generally does not happen. Thus, for example, there is an exercise involving the matching of the beginnings and ends of sentences (essentially involving deciding which main and subordinate clauses should be linked) in which the subordinate clause begins with 'while', 'when' or 'because'. The distinction between chronological sequence, temporal overlap and reason-result is not clarified and there is no attempt to illustrate how these relations may link separate sentences (see extract below):

2 a Match the beginnings of the sentences in A with the endings in B using *when, while* or *because*.

A	B
1. My dad (give) me a lift	a we (have) dinner.
2. My relatives (arrive)	b she (ski) in Austria
3. The police (stop) him	c I (meet) my husband
4. It (snow)	d Marco (drive) past me
5. You (fall) off your bike	e it (rain) so hard
6. I (wait) for the bus this morning	f I (open) my bedroom curtains
7. Anna (break) her leg	this morning
8. I (do) a summer job in a hotel	g he (drive) too fast
	h you (not pay) attention to the
	road.

Cunningham & Moor, 2005, p. 17.

There is also an exercise in which the focus is on 'linking words' (*although, besides, despite this, for that reason, however, as a result, therefore, what's more*) but in which students are actually encouraged to ignore critical differences among them (see p. 119).

New Cutting Edge Intermediate has 23 main reading texts and 9 main writing exercises. Of these, 19 focus on the *recount/narrative genre* (14 of the reading texts and five of the writing exercises) and 10 on the *description/classification* (seven reading texts and three writing exercises). On only two occasions is *explanation* highlighted (two of the reading texts) and on only one occasion is the emphasis on *discussion/argumentation* (a writing exercise). So far as text-types are concerned, the focus is largely on short articles although there are two travel guides, one advertisement and one song among the reading texts and the writing exercises include two biographies, two letters, one email and one curriculum vitae. Typical overall rhetorical structuring of different text-types is not discussed. Nor is typical internal structuring of different genres.

4.3.3.1.4 *Touchstone*

Touchstone (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005 & 2006) is presented as follows by its authors:

It is a 'corpus informed' course, drawing on extensive research into the corpus of North American English in the Cambridge International Corpus

- a large database of everyday conversations and texts that show how people actually use English.

Corpus research ensures that learners using *Touchstone* will encounter the most useful and widely used words, phrases, and grammar in everyday situations. The research also makes possible the introduction of the important syllabus area of 'conversation management strategies' - how to start and end conversations, how to show interest, and how to ask questions that are not too direct. The result is a groundbreaking course of language and skills development that helps students to communicate naturally and effectively, even at the very beginning levels.

Touchstone 1, Teacher's edition, p. iv.

The authors then go on to outline how a corpus can be used to reveal the most frequently used words (and typical contexts of use), phrases, collocations, meanings associated with grammatical constructions, and conversational management strategies (pp. iv & v), referring to the importance of review and recycling and of the ordering within units (pp. v & vi).

Each unit is constructed as follows:

Unit opener	(Unit overview and warm-up activity)
Lesson A	(Grammar, pronunciation and speaking)
Lesson B	(Vocabulary, grammar and speaking)
Lesson C	(Conversation strategies, listening and speaking)
Lesson D	(Reading, writing, listening and speaking)
Vocabulary notebook	(Strategies for learning vocabulary)

In all four *Teacher's Books*, a list of the 500 most frequently used words in the corpus is provided. This list is not accompanied by an indication of the frequency of different senses/ contexts of these words. Nor is the list extended as the series progresses. There are no equivalent lists for frequency of grammatical items. As

an indication of the way in which content is organized, the content of one of the units (Unit 2) of *Touchstone 4* is outlined in the following table:

Table 4.3: *Touchstone 4 - An example of unit contents*

Unit 2: Title - Personal tastes				
Functions/ Topics	Grammar	Vocabulary	Conversational Strategies	Pronunciation
Talk about makeovers, style and fashion Talk about your tastes in clothes and music	Make comparisons with <i>as . . . as</i> and <i>not as ... as</i> Ask negative questions when you want or expect someone to agree with you	Colors, patterns, materials, and styles of clothing	Show understanding by summarizing what people say Use <i>Now</i> to introduce a follow-up question on a different aspect of a topic	Linking words with the same consonant sound
Listening	Reading	Writing	Vocabulary notebook	Free talk
<i>My music collection</i> Listen for details in a conversation, and answer questions; then listen and choose the best responses <i>What's your thing?</i> Listen to four people talk about their tastes, and identify the topics they discuss; then listen and answer questions	<i>A free spirit</i> An interview with a woman with very individual tastes	Write questions to interview a partner on his or her personal style; write answers to your partner's questions <i>Punctuation review:</i> comma, ash, and exclamation mark	<i>Blue suede shoes</i> Find and label pictures that illustrate new words	<i>What's popular?</i> Group work: Discuss questions about current popular tastes and how tastes have changed

Although the first column of each unit contains a section labelled *Functions/ Topics*, it is not functional in anything but the broadest sense. However, functions *do* appear throughout the textbook (see, for example, the extract from *Touchstone Student's Book 4*, p. 14 below) and language focus points are always fully contextualized, the overall topic running throughout all stages of each unit. Thus, for example, the following sample sentences, used to illustrate the use of *as . . . as* and *not as . . . as* in *Book 4 Unit 2*, relate to the overall theme of style and fashion:

Grammar. Comparisons with (not) as . . . as

Adjectives The pants are just **as comfortable as** my jeans.

I don't look **as scruffy as** I did.

Nouns She spends **as little as possible** on her make-up.

She doesn't wear **as many bright colours as** she should.

Adverbs I tried **as hard as** I could to find the right style for her.

I don't like short hair **as much as** long hair.

Touchstone Student's Book 4, p. 13.

In *Touchstone 4* there are 27 main vocabulary-focused exercises, 16 with a primary focus on meaning (e.g. involving dictionary work), 8 that focus on parts of speech, 2 on word formation and one on spelling and pronunciation. In all cases, as in the following example, the main topic focus of the unit is maintained:

Figure 4.4: From *Touchstone Student's Book 4, p. 13*

A Pair work Read the product descriptions on this Web page, and take turns describing the items in the photos.

Search

Outerwear
Shirts
Pants
Footwear
Accessories
Activewear
Kids
For Him
For Her
Gift Cards

FREE SHIPPING over \$50

1. Choose from our huge selection of men's and women's **leather and suede jackets**.

2. Luxury **cashmere** scarves and **silk ties** make perfect gifts.

3. Men's **wool turtleneck** and **V-neck sweaters**.

4. Women's **long-sleeved cotton tops**, available in a range of **solid colors**. Shown here in **neon green, dark green, and light green**.

5. Looking for **denim jeans**? Whether you want **boot-cut** or **flared, fitted** or **baggy** – we have jeans to fit you!

6. Women's **short-sleeved striped shirts** in **polyester**. **Floral-print** and **plaid shirts** also available.

7. **Rubber boots** in a variety of patterns. Shown here in **turquoise** with a **polka-dot pattern**.

Of the 18 main exercises relating specifically to grammar, the majority focus on meaning or on a combination of structure and meaning as illustrated in the two examples below:

Grammar. *Negative questions:*

When you want or expect someone to agree with you, you can use negative questions to:

Express an opinion

Suggest an idea

Show surprise

Isn't this jacket great?

Isn't it a little expensive?

Isn't it on sale?

Don't you think it's great?

Don't you think it's too bright? It'd look good,

Don't you like it?

Don't you just love it?

don't you think?

Touchstone Student's Book 4, p. 14.

While there is some focus on cohesion and coherence, there are issues associated with categorization. Thus, for example, binary relations (e.g. Reason-Result; Means-Purpose and Contrastive Alteration) are treated as if they were unitary, the emphasis being on subordination and/or nominalization, with examples involving more than one sentence (whether signalled or unsignalled) being omitted. Presumably, partly, because it is difficult to identify unsignalled relations (however frequently they occur) using corpus search tools. Similarly, important semantic distinctions among various types of contrastive relation remain unidentified (see example below):

Grammar *Linking ideas*

Contrast: **Although/Even though** environmental problems are overwhelming, there is hope.

Some people water their lawns daily **in spite of/despite** drought warnings.

Reason: Climates are changing **because of/as a result of/ due to** global warming.

Carbon dioxide levels are increasing **because** we are burning oil, coal, and gas.

Purpose: Turn down the air-conditioning **(in order) to** save electricity.

Recycle garbage **so (that)** it doesn't end up in a landfill.

Alternative: Use public transportation **instead of** driving your car.

Take showers **instead of** baths.

Notice:

in order to/ to + verb

although/ even though/because/ so that / so + clause

*in spite of/ despite/ because of/ as a result of/ due to/ instead of + noun
(or verb + -ing)*

Touchstone Student's Book 4, p. 111.

The dominant genre in the main reading texts in *Touchstone 4* is *narrative/recount*, with 12 of the 23 reading texts in *Touchstone 4* being in this genre, and 4 of the 12 writing exercises involving *recount/narration*. The remaining reading texts involve *description/classification* (x5), *discussion/argumentation* (x4) and *explanation* (x2) and the remaining main writing texts involve *discussion/argumentation* (x2), *description/classification* (x1) *explanation* (x1) or a blend of two or more genres (x4).

There is little variety of text-types in the 23 main reading texts - 13 short articles; 9 magazine interviews; and one short story. The 12 main written exercises are, however, more varied in terms of text-types - 4 articles; 2 short stories; 3 letters; one interview; one project proposal and one note.

Considerable attention is paid to various aspects of conversational interaction (e.g. use of *so* to start or close a topic (Unit 4); use of expressions like *That's a good point* (Unit 4). However, much less attention is paid to the overall rhetorical structure of different written text-types and the internal discourse structure of different written genres. In the contents section of *Touchstone 4*, there are two entries under the heading of *Writing* that suggest a primary focus on the rhetorical structure of two written text types:

Unit 1: Format for writing an anecdote or a story

Unit 12: Format for writing a letter of application

In reality, however, the advice provided is very general:

Writing an anecdote or a story

- Set the general time or place.
- Set the particular time or pace.
- Describe what happened.
- End the story and, if possible, link the events to now.

Touchstone Student's Book 4, p. 9.

4.3.3.2 Specific purposes textbooks: A focus on English in Academic Contexts

In this section, textbooks concerned specifically with the use of English for academic purposes (EAP) are in focus. Textbooks of this type did not begin to appear in any significant number until the penultimate decade of the 20th century and only a few of those that are currently still available are included as examples.

Two examples of approaches to genre-centered academic writing instruction emerging out of the North American 'school' are *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (Swales & Feak, 1994) and *English in Today's Research World* (Swales & Feak, 2000). These works are particularly interesting in relation to the major contribution that Swales has made to research on genre and English for Academic Purposes⁵⁶.

Defining genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share the same communicative or rhetorical purpose" Swales (1990, p. 58) notes that genres are subject to a number of constraints and that exemplars or instances of a particular genre vary in terms of their prototypicality (pp. 45-57). Although, for Swales, genres are inextricably associated with what he refers to as 'discourse communities' (pp. 24-27), and although "shared communicative purpose rather than similarities of form" is "the primary determinant of a genre" (p.46), nevertheless Swales notes that "language plays a significant and indispensable role" (p. 45). He adds that authors may differ in relation to the degree of complexity of their rhetorical purpose and also in relation to the extent to which they exhibit universal or language specific tendencies (pp. 61-67). He also notes

⁵⁶ Two textbooks that are clearly based on relational syllabus design principles supplemented by research on genre - *Writing texts in English* (Crombie & Johnson, 2009) and A genre-based approach to academic writing (Johnson & Crombie, 2011) - have not been included in this analysis/ discussion because they are available only in Taiwan and mainland China.

that, in exercising genre skills, people refer not only to ‘content schemata’ (prior knowledge of the world) but also to ‘formal schemata’ (formal patterning of texts). Swales focuses, in particular, on the importance of ‘rhetorical moves’ and ‘steps’ and their relationship to choice of linguistic structures. Thus, for example, he proposes (p. 141) a three move structure for creating research space - establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche, noting the relationship between these three moves and linguistic selection. However, while a number of researchers, including Swales, have tended to focus on genres in relation to specific academic areas, others, such as Bhatia (1998, pp. 26-27), have noted the importance of being able to generalize across disciplinary boundaries in training novice academic writers:

We need the sophistication and subtleties of ESP but at the same time we need to master the power of generalizations across disciplinary boundaries. . . . However, in order to deal with the complexity of generic patterns so commonly intertwined in academic discourse across disciplines, one needs a system of linguistic analysis which is powerful enough to account for the intricacies of academic genres across disciplines.

This is an observation that has particular significance for the examination of EAP textbooks, as does the distinction between those works that focus on what I refer to here as ‘text-types’ (e.g. essays; academic articles) and those that focus on what I refer to as ‘genres’ or ‘discourse modes’ (e.g. *explanation; exposition/argument*)⁵⁷.

4.3.3.2.1 *Academic writing for graduate students*

Academic Writing for Graduate Students (Swales & Feak, 1994), aimed at non-native speakers of English studying at graduate level (p. 1), includes texts from

⁵⁷ As Lin (2010, p. 14) observes: “The terms ‘genre’ and ‘text-type’ have sometimes been used interchangeably (Stubbs, 1996, p. 11). However, constructs that are largely socially defined (e.g. *novels, academic articles*) and constructs that are largely defined in terms of communicative or rhetorical functions (e.g. *arguments, explanations*) have sometimes been referred to as ‘genres’ and sometimes as ‘text-types’. Biber (1989, pp. 5-6) uses ‘genre’ to refer to socially defined categories of text (e.g. poems, novels, lectures) and ‘text type’ to refer to communicative/rhetorical functions (e.g. explaining, arguing). Derewianka (1994) and Crombie and Johnson (2004, p. 144), on the other hand, use ‘genre’ to refer to communicative/rhetorical functions and ‘text type’ to refer to socially defined categories of text”.

mechanical engineering through to music theory and adopts what the authors refer to as a 'genre-centered' approach' (p. 3). The first three units are intended as preparation for the following five (whose exercises are described as being 'more genre-specific') and include, in Unit 1, a focus on each of the following: audience; purpose and strategy; organization; style; flow; presentation and positioning (i.e. the relationship between students' writing and the relevant community of practice). Units 2 and 3 focus on some of the ways in which information may be organized (e.g. in terms of general/particular and problem/solution patterns) and the relationship between this and both processes and procedures and specific aspects of language. Next, the focus moves to the writing (and characteristic features) of summaries and critiques. In the last two chapters, the emphasis is on research papers, the focus being on particular sections (e.g. methods sections) and moves (e.g. establishing a niche) and language that is characteristically associated with them.

The forty-one sample texts and text-segments included in the book include some very short paragraphs as well as some much longer texts. While almost half (20) involve the *classification/ description* mode and almost a quarter (10) involve the *argument* mode, the remainder are blended texts or text segments which combine different modes, including *classification/description* and *argument* (x5), *recount* and *argument* (x1) and some combination of *classification/ description*, *argument*, *explanation* and *instruction*.

In each unit, there are what are referred to as 'language focus points' which are followed by exercises/practice tasks. Thus, for example, in Unit 1, the language focus points make reference to formal grammar and style (including the use of 'more formal' vocabulary, 'linking words and phrases' and 'this' plus a 'summary word'). The exercises focus on vocabulary development, clause and sentence grammar, semantic relational signalling (cohesion) and sub-skills and strategies.

Semantic/discourse relations are treated under the heading of 'linking words and phrases', the primary emphasis being on the signalling of these relations. A reasonable number of relations is included and there is a table (p. 22) in which

these are classified in terms of seven categories: *addition*, *adversative*, *cause and effect*, *clarification*, *contrast*, *illustration* and *intensification* (see below). While the nature of the classification could be challenged (in terms of its focus on breadth rather than specificity)⁵⁸ and while it would have been good to see more variety of relations and relational signalling⁵⁹ (as well as some examples of unsignalled relations) and some discussion of the fact that the same ‘signals’ may be associated with different relations⁶⁰, this type of focus does reflect ongoing research in the area of discourse that is likely to be of considerable practical use to language students.

Table 4.4: *The classification of discourse relations according to Swales & Feak (1994, p. 22)*

	Subordinators	Sentence connectors	Phrase Linkers
Addition		furthermore; in addition; moreover	in addition to
Adversative	although; even though; despite the fact that	however; nevertheless	despite; in spite of
Cause and Effect	because; since	therefore; as a result; consequently; hence; thus	because of; due to; as a result of
Clarification		in other words; that is; i.e.	
Contrast	while; whereas	in contrast; however on the other hand; conversely	unlike
Illustration		for example; for instance	
Intensification		on the contrary; as a matter of fact; in fact	

Most of the material in this textbook (e.g. discussion of the interaction between general and specific information) applies across genres and text-types and the final two chapters demonstrate how this information may be realized in a particular social genre (i.e. text type), that is, the research paper. Overall, the book provides many valuable research-based insights into academic writing and

⁵⁸ Thus, for example, ‘on the contrary’, included under the heading of ‘intensification’ is clearly primarily contrastive/ adversative in orientation and no distinction is made between different types of adversative relation, such as, for example, those that include simple contrast and those that are concessive. Furthermore, temporal relations are omitted from the table.

⁵⁹ Thus, for example, under the heading of ‘cause and effect’, no reference is made to Means-Result, Means-Purpose or Grounds-Conclusion.

⁶⁰ Thus, for example, ‘while’ may appear in the context of Chronological Sequence and Concession-Contraexpectation.

demonstrates some of the ways in which research on discourse analysis can complement other approaches to the design of language syllabuses. While the focus here is on EAP, there is no reason why an adaptation of this type of integrated syllabus design (combining, within the context of a text-centred framework, lexical, structural, functional and discoursal features) could not be applied more generally.

4.3.3.2.2 *English in today's research world*

Whereas *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* is intended largely for learners of English as a second language, *English in Today's Research World* (Swales & Feak, 2000) is intended also to be “helpful to graduate students who have English as their first language or who are bilingual or bidialectal” (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 1). Hsiao-Li (2011, p. 32) has suggested that this may be, in part, the reason why “[a]lthough seven of the eight units have language focus sections (including, for example, a consideration of complex prepositional noun phrases (Unit 2) and tense and reporting verbs (Unit 5)), this type of focus is by no means as extensive as it is in the case of *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*” (p. 31). She adds:

[S]tudents for whom English is a first language will not necessarily have any real understanding of the interaction between text type, language function and language choice and may, therefore, benefit from discussion of language specifics as much, or almost as much, as those for whom English is an additional language. *It may therefore be that the de-emphasizing of language specifics in the later work is as much a reflection of a changing emphasis in North American genre studies as it is of the intention to be more inclusive in terms of readership* (emphasis added) (op. cit.).

English in Today's Research World begins, in the first chapter, in a way that is similar to *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, looking, in a general sense, at authorial positioning, writing processes, writing strategies, writing styles and writing products. It goes on, however, to explore, from the perspective of three particular categories (audience, organization and content), specific text-types (conference abstracts, conference posters and literature reviews), once again

emphasizing characteristics that are not specific to particular academic areas. While being based on a similar type of syllabus to *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, *English in Today's Research World* provides less information about the relationship between genre, text-types and language choice.

4.3.3.2.3 *Writing academic English*

Another popular textbook that focuses on academic writing is *Writing academic English* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991). It begins in Part 1 (Chapter 1) with a discussion of paragraph structure, focusing on topic, supporting sentences and concluding sentences. It goes on (Chapter 2) to discuss 'unity and coherence' in relation to lexical repetition and substitution, pronominal use, logical order and transition signals. Following this (Chapter 3), there is a discussion of 'supporting details' that focuses on facts, quotations and statistics and includes direct and indirect quotation, citation and punctuation. Part 2 is headed 'Writing an essay'. It begins (Chapter 4) by discussing traditional, three part essays. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 9 are devoted to what are referred to as 'Chronological Order: Process Essays', 'Cause/Effect Essays', 'Comparison/Contrast Essays' and 'Argumentative Essays'. What these titles suggest, and what proves to be the case, is that (a) discourse mode/ genre (e.g. *argument*) is confused with discourse/semantic relations and (b) that many different types of relation are either omitted or subsumed under generic relational headings (e.g. Cause-Effect and Comparison-Contrast). Chapter 8 is devoted to paraphrase and summary writing and Part 3 (Chapters 10-15) focuses on sentence, clause and phrase types.

This textbook focuses, in large part, on the 'essay', a text-type that is now primarily associated with academic study and is, therefore, likely to be of considerable interest to students. However, although the contents list indicates that it combines aspects of a fairly traditional structural approach to syllabus design with aspects of a more discourse-based approach, the syllabus design principles appear to be less clearly thought through than is the case in the first two textbooks discussed in this section. In particular, there are a number of problems that result from the confusion/ conflation of categories. Thus, for example, Lin (2010, p. 141) observes with reference to *Writing Academic English* that there is what she refers to as a 'mixing of levels', with model essays being introduced to

demonstrate what are referred to as 'chronological processes', 'logical division', 'block organization', 'chain organization' or 'comparison and contrast'. 'Comparison and contrast' and 'logical division' can be interpreted as overarching types of discourse relationship (with, for example, *means-purpose* and *reason-result* relations being examples of the 'logical division' type and *denial-correction* and simple contrast being examples of the 'comparison and contrast' type). However, 'chronological processes' cannot be interpreted in the same way in that the *chronological sequence* relation is one type of the broader/ overarching category of temporal relations, which includes the *temporal overlap* relation. Furthermore, while 'chronological processes', 'logical division' and 'comparison and contrast' can be interpreted in discourse relational terms, 'block organization' and 'chain organization' cannot. Hence, Lin's observation about the mixing of levels.

In a 'model essay' labelled 'chronological process' and entitled 'How a Solar Hot Water System Works' (Oshima & Hogue, 1991, p. 97) point out that "you can also use chronological order when you are writing instructions" and that "[a] third kind of writing that uses chronological order describes events over a period of time, such as biography, autobiography, or history". As Lin (2010, p. 141) observes, the reality is that "almost any type of writing can involve chronological order". As she also observes, "the model essay [under consideration here] is . . . actually an explanation [explanation genre/mode] that relies heavily on *Means-Purpose* (to which no reference is made either directly or indirectly)".

Also commenting on Oshima and Hogue's treatment of what they refer to as 'chronological process essays' or 'chronological order essays', Huang Wu (2011, pp. 35-36) makes a similar observation:

'[E]ssay' is being treated as a genre and 'chronological process and/or chronological order essay' as a sub-genre. However, as the authors go some way to acknowledging, chronological ordering can be associated with a wide range of text types (e.g. biography, autobiography) and discourse modes (e.g. instructing). Furthermore, although the 'model

essay' referred to by Oshima and Hogue as a 'chronological process essay' or 'chronological order essay' is said to involve '*describing* technical processes' (emphasis added), it is clearly primarily explanatory in nature and relies as heavily on the relationship of *means-purpose* as it does on that of *chronological/ temporal sequence*. All of this indicates the problems that can result from a failure to make clear distinctions among different types and levels of categorization.

What I believe emerges in the case of *Writing academic English* are some of the problems that can result from an attempt to blend different levels of knowledge classification that relate to the design of a language syllabus without giving careful consideration to the various rationales for these approaches and the types of research that underpin them.

4.3.3.2.4 *Writers at work: The essay*

In common with the previous textbook discussed, *Writers at work: The essay* (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmiz, 2008) focuses on the essay. This book is the third in a three volume series, the first two focusing on the paragraph and 'the short composition' respectively. It has seven chapters, the first of which focuses on 'writing basics' (including, in particular, audience and purpose). The following four chapters (Chapters 2 – 5) focus respectively on what are referred to as 'explanatory essays', 'problem-solution' essays, 'comparison-contrast essays' and 'persuasive essays'. The final two chapters focus on the use of readings as supporting material (Chapter 6) and the skill of timed essay writing (Chapter 7).

The titles of Chapters 2 – 5 raise some interesting issues in that they appear to reflect a fundamental confusion in relation to the differences between *text-types* (e.g. *the essay*) and *discourse modes/genres* (e.g. *explanation*), between both of these and *discourse/semantic relations* (e.g. *simple comparison; simple contrast*), and between all of these and *conventional superstructures/non-genre-specific macropatterning* (e.g. *problem-solution*) and *rhetorical purpose/intended communicative effect* (e.g. *persuasion*). Thus, the authors appear to be locked into the type of classification that was characteristic of the second half of the 18th. century (see, for example, Bain, 1871). Furthermore, although the authors refer to

four types of essay, of the seven sample texts (all taken from student writing) they include, six are primarily in the *argument mode/genre* (although all are blended, with four also involving *recount* and two also involving *instruction*) and one is primarily in the *recount mode* (but involving implied *explanation*).

Explanatory essays are defined as follows by the authors (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmiz, 2008, p. 16):

An explanatory essay explains or analyses something that the writer wishes to inform a reader about. The writer has a specific reason for wanting to give the explanation and may give an opinion about the topic. This opinion is supported by examples, details, or other information, so that readers find it convincing.

Quite apart from the fact that explanation may *not* involve 'opinion' (which is more characteristic of the *argument mode*) or be intended to be 'convincing' (which seems to align more closely with the essay type described as 'persuasive' by the authors), the actual text discussed (entitled *Life lessons from school*) is clearly largely in *recount mode* as the following extract (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmiz, 2008, p. 13) illustrates:

I hated school! Now, however, when I feel discouraged by my problems, I overcome this by trying to remember my years at boarding school. Those years were challenging and full of problems, but still, I gained a lot from them. After I graduated from elementary school, I left my family and went to live at a boarding school because my hometown was very far from my middle school. . . .

As a new student, I was famous because I did not like to obey the rules of the school. I wasn't used to following a lot of rules because when I had lived at home, my parents usually left me alone to do what I wanted. . . .

While staying at school, I learned to be thankful for my parents. The first few years, I got homesick and sometimes cried in bed. . . .

In addition to outlining a number of problems and including a number of *Reason-Result* relations, this short extract also includes *Means-Purpose* and two contrastive relations (*Concession-Contraexpectation*). This suggests that the text might, in terms of the four categories provided by the authors, equally well be classified as a 'problem-solution essay' or a 'comparison-contrast essay'.

What all of this illustrates are some of the dangers associated with a failure to differentiate among different layers of analysis/ interpretation/ classification. In the absence of this type of discrimination, any attempt to realize an essentially discourse-based syllabus (as this textbook appears to do) is almost bound to result in a work that appears to be haphazard and contradictory.

4.3.3.2.5 Academic writing course: Study skills in English

Another textbook that focuses on academic writing is *Academic writing course: Study skills in English*. It first appeared in 1999 but I shall be referring specifically to the third edition (Jordan, 2002). One of the main aims of this textbook is to provide non-native speakers of English with skills that will enable them “to express themselves coherently in English” (Jordan, 2002, p. 4). Most of the nineteen units are said to focus on “language functions that are used to express a particular notion or idea, e.g. description and definitions” (p. 4) and eighteen of them have a section on structure and vocabulary. In addition to the discussion of communicative purpose and skills (such as summarizing and paraphrasing), different aspects of text structure are featured within particular units. These include, for example, generic textual macro-patterning (e.g. situation, problem, solution and evaluation) and discourse/semantic relations (e.g. causatives).

Following two initial sections in which the focus is on accuracy (including references to spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary and style and appropriateness) and on textual organization in a general sense, the work focuses on various functions (including description, definition, exemplification, classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, generalization and qualification, argument and conclusion). In some cases, these are macro-functions – modes/genres (e.g. *argument*); in some, they are cognitive processes

(e.g. *cause/effect*) that underlie more specific binary relations; in some, the labelling (e.g. *exemplification*) indicates that the focus is on one member of a binary relation. In addition to the main content, there are a number of appendices dealing with specific aspects of text construction such as punctuation, tense and noun types.

On closer examination, the primary content of the main units can be categorized as indicated in *Table 4.5* below:

Table 4.5: *The primary focus of units in Jordan (2002)*

Main focus	Unit titles
Cohesion and coherence (mainly emphasizing semantic relations)	Unit 5 Definitions Unit 6 Exemplification Unit 8 Comparison and contrast Unit 9 Cause and effect Unit 10 Generalisations, qualification and caution
Discourse genres/ modes	Unit 2 Description: Process and procedure Unit 3 Description: Physical Unit 4 Narrative Unit 7 Classification Unit 12 Discussion [argument]
Research skills & sub-skill	Unit 11 Interpretation of data Unit 14 Academic style Unit 15 Paraphrasing and summarising Unit 16 Quotations Unit 17 Surveys, questionnaires and projects Unit 18 Proof reading
Macro-structures and paragraph development	Unit 13 Introductions and conclusions
Combination	Unit 1 Structure and cohesion
Examination preparation	Unit 19 Examinations

Topics vary throughout units. Thus, for example, in Unit 7 (entitled *Classification*), the exercises cover three different topic areas: *State schools in England and Wales*; *the classification of birds*; and *the classification of types of drink*.

There are twenty three sample texts or text segments in this textbook. These range from single paragraphs to short essays and cover a range of topics, including, for example, *the history of the English language*, *State schools in England and Wales*, *the climate* and an unemployment survey. These texts and text segments are not discussed directly in terms of text-type. However, discourse mode/genre is prioritized, with eleven of the texts/text segments involving

description/classification, eight involving *argumentation*; two involving *explanation*, and a further two involving *narration/recount*. Even so, none of the units deals *directly* with the *explanation* or *narrative/recount* modes/genres. The four extracts below indicate the way in which Jordan highlights, in texts and text segments, a variety of different aspects of language typically associated with the *classification/description mode/genre* (Extracts 1 - 4) and the *argument/discussion genre*:

The vast majority of children in Britain (87%) attend state (local authority) schools which provide compulsory education from the age of 5 to 16 years. These schools can be classified according to the age range of the pupils and the type of education provided. Basically, there are two types of school, primary and secondary, although in some areas there are also middle schools. (p.43)

Birds are instantly recognisable creatures. Perhaps it is their ability to fly that causes this. Some people might consider that their shape was the most distinguishing feature. Everyone, however, agrees on the characteristics that a bird possesses: two wings, feathers, two legs, a toothless bill or beak, warm blood, and it lays eggs. The modern system of classifying birds is like a pyramid, with the base formed by 8514 different species. A convenient definition of species is: an interbreeding group of birds which do not normally mate with other such groups. (p. 45)

Lecturing as a method of teaching is so frequently under attack today from educational psychologists and by students that some justification is needed to retain it. Critics believe that it results in passive methods of learning which tend to be less effective than those which fully engage the learner. They also maintain that students have no opportunity to ask questions and must all receive the same content at the same pace, that they are exposed only to the teacher's interpretation of subject matter which will inevitably be biased and that anyway, few lectures rise above dullness. Nevertheless, in a number of inquiries this pessimistic assessment of lecturing as a

teaching method proves not to be general among students, although they do fairly often comment on poor lecturing techniques. (p. 77)

Texts and text segments of this type are generally followed by tasks that involve analysis of the text in ways that highlight particular discourse features. Thus, for example, in the case of a text headed *What is language?* in Unit 6, students are asked to “draw a box around all the expressions which have the same meaning as *for example*” (p. 40). In relation to another text, involving the classification of birds, they are asked to complete some sample sentence pairs by adding phrases that relate to the topic in a way that indicates the presence of exemplification (p. 46). Following tasks such as these, students are invited to engage in dependent and/or independent text construction in a way that is similar to the approach recommended by Derewianka (1990).

The 125 tasks included in this textbook were classified into type. As indicated below, over half of them are concerned with discourse/semantic relations:

- focus on discourse/ semantic relations (57);
- focus on vocabulary development (25);
- focus on traditional grammar points (17);
- focus on sub-skills (16);
- focus on referencing (10).

Notwithstanding the ongoing focus on discourse/ semantic relations, there is here, as in each of the other textbooks examined in this section, a tendency to over-generalization of these relations and relational types. Thus, all except one of the *cause-effect* relational type that are exemplified are *reason-result* relations (signalled by, for example, *because, as a result of, consequently, due to, leads to*). The one exception, a relation of *condition-consequence* (*If there is an increase in demand, then prices rise*), is not differentiated from the others. Nevertheless, the syllabus on which this textbook is based is an interesting one, involving an overall focus on discourse that prioritizes discourse mode/genre and relates discussion of

skills and sub-skills, lexis and syntax to that framework through a focus on cohesion.

4.3.3.2.6 *Academic encounters: Life in society*

Academic encounters: Life in society (Brown & Hood, 2008) focuses on “reading, study skills and writing texts” and *includes* texts used in “North American and other colleges and universities”, all of which are sociology-based (pp. xiii & xv). It is divided into five units (entitled *Belonging to a group*, *Gender roles*, *Media and society*, *Breaking the rules* and *Changing societies*), each made up of two chapters. In each of the chapters, there are four readings. Thus, for example, in Chapter 1 (headed *Marriage, family and the home*), the readings are: *The family today*, *Alternative lifestyles*, *How we learn to behave* and *The importance of the social environment*.

All of the forty reading texts are of a single text-type, that is, mini academic articles in the area of sociology. In terms of discourse mode/ genre, thirty one of the texts are in the *description/classification* mode and nine are in blended mode (combining *description/classification* and *recount*). However, this is not discussed/explained at any point although the authors make the following observation (Brown & Hood, 2008, p. 165):

A text will often contain different parts that have different functions. One part might *recount* past events, for example, while another part *argues* a point of view. Recognising the function or purpose of different parts of a text helps you to understand more quickly what you are reading. . . . [There is a] list of functions that different parts of a text might have [and the list includes] to *discuss different sides of an issue*, to *argue a point of view*, to tell a story or *recount past events*, to *report* data and to give facts and *explain* them (emphasis added).

The first of the two extracts below is taken from one of the *description/classification* texts; the second from a blended text (*description/classification* and *recount*):

Values - Values are socially shared ideas about what we consider to be good, desirable, or important in life. We show what we value by how we live our lives. For example, if we value money we are likely to spend a lot of time thinking or worrying about it, and looking for ways to get more. If many people in a society value money, this will be reflected in the amount of attention that the society gives to it (for example, in its newspapers). The values of a society form the basis of its rules, or norms.

Norms - Norms define what are socially acceptable or unacceptable behavior in particular social situations. When we violate or go against social norms, there may be some kind of negative consequence. That is, there may be a penalty or punishment to discourage us from acting this way again.

Brown & Hood, 2008, pp. 29 & 30.

The role of *nature* (what we inherit) and of *nurture* (what we learn) in making us what we are have long been debated. In the seventeenth century it was generally believed that people became what they were taught to be. By the second half of the nineteenth century, a quite different view was popular. Instead of looking to nurture – what people are taught – to explain human behaviour; many social scientists looked to nature – what people inherit from their parents. . .

Since the fourteenth century there have been more than fifty recorded cases of feral children. **Feral** children have supposedly been brought up by animals in the wild. One of the most famous is “the wild boy of Aveyron”. In 1797, this boy was captured by hunters in the woods of southern France. . .

Brown & Hood, 2008, pp. 23 & 24.

Among the relations in the first extract above are *Alternation* (signalled by 'or'), *Means-Result* (signalled by 'by'), *Statement-Exemplification* (signalled by 'for example'), *Condition-Consequence* (signalled by 'if' and by 'when'), *Bonding* (signalled by 'and') and *Means-Purpose* (signalled by the infinitive form of the

verb). Among the relations in the second extract are *Paraphrase* (signalled by bracketing), *Temporal Sequence* (signalled by chronologically ordered time phrases), *Simple Contrast* (signalled by 'quite different' and 'instead of'), *Statement-Exemplification* (signalled by 'one of' plus comparative). In both extracts, there are several cohesive chains (e.g. we . . . we . . . we . . . our . . . we . . . we . . . ; we . . . us . . . we . . . us) and anaphoric references. Although all of this is of particular interest in relation to the genres and text-types exemplified, the authors do not draw attention to any of it. In addition, even though all of the relations indicated are present in the extracts, they are not unpacked for learner writers using the textbook. Furthermore, the authors refer to a 'chronological paragraph' as one which "tells the story of how some New York City police officers solved a crime" (Brown & Hood p. 166) without making any reference to the *recount/narrative* genre.

The 125 short tasks included in this book are made up as follows:

- focus on sub-skills (38);
- focus on vocabulary development (22);
- focus on discourse/semantic relations (11);
- focus on traditional grammar points (3); and
- focus on referencing (2).

Among the sub-skills in focus are scanning, skimming, predicting, identifying main ideas, and speed reading techniques. Those exercises that focus on discourse/ semantic relations are referred to in terms of 'linking ideas' and are largely concerned with comparison and contrast (e.g. focus on adjectival comparatives and on comparative phrases such as 'different from' and 'a difference between').

This syllabus underlying this textbook appears to be largely oriented towards some of the sub-skills involved in reading, with particular reference to reading texts exhibiting a particular text-type (academic articles) in a particular discipline area (sociology). However, although the texts included largely exhibit *classification/description* or a combination of *classification/description* and

recount, few of the insights into the characteristic features of *these genres that are available in research in the area of discourse analysis are drawn upon*.

4.3.3.2.7 *Making connections: A strategic approach to academic reading*

The final textbook discussed here focuses on reading. This is *Making connections: A strategic approach to academic reading* (Pakenham, 2005), a book intended for high intermediate students. This textbook has four units, each having a specific topic/theme (*World health in the twenty first century, Living in a multicultural society, Aspects of language and Looking after planet earth*). There are five reading texts in each unit – four shorter ones (approximately eight paragraphs each) and one longer one (approximately thirty paragraphs each). Thus, for example, under the main heading *Living in a multicultural society*, the longer text is entitled *The challenge of diversity*, and the four shorter reading texts have the following titles: *The age of immigration; Who are today's immigrants; Views on multiculturalism; and Experimental evidence on the nature of prejudices*. Each of the reading text is, in terms of text-type, a mini-article.

So far as discourse mode/genre is concerned, the twenty texts included in the book can be classified as follows:

- *description/ classification* (x4);
- *recount* (x1);
- *description/classification and argument* (x8);
- *description/classification and recount* (x4),
- *argument and recount* (x2);
- *description/classification, argument and explanation* (x1).

However, neither text-type nor discourse mode/genre is referred to in any explicit way.

Before each reading text there is a section headed *Skills and Strategies* which includes, in addition to a focus on sub-skills (such as identifying the 'main idea' of a text), general comprehension questions, vocabulary practice, and information about clause and sentence grammar and cohesive devices. After each reading text,

there is an exercise headed *Main idea check*, followed by another section headed *A closer look* in which there is a series of detailed comprehension questions and a final two lexically-focused exercises.

The 147 exercises can be categorized as follows:

- focus on sub-skills/strategies (50);
- focus on detailed comprehension check questions (45), of which 15 are concerned, indirectly, with discourse/ semantic relations involving, in the main, comparison and contrast;
- focus on cohesive devices (35);
- focus on vocabulary development (30), of which 6 are concerned, indirectly, with discourse/ semantic relations;
- focus on traditional grammar points (16).

Although a considerable number of the exercises involve a focus on cohesion in the context of semantic relations,⁶¹ the primary emphasis is always on the nature of the cohesive devices involved. As in the case of a number of the other textbooks discussed in this section, cognitive processes (e.g. cause and effect) are treated in a general sense without any relational discrimination. Thus, for example, although cause/effect features significantly, almost all of the 'markers' introduced relate to the *Reason-Result* relation as in the case of a table entitled *Cause and effect connecting expressions* (p. 19) in which eighteen of the expressions listed typically occur in the context of *Reason-Result* (e.g. *as a result of [+cause]*; *because of [+cause]*; *because [+cause]*; and *As a result [+effect]*), one typically occurs in the context of *Means-Purpose* (*in order to [+cause]*), and one in the context of *Condition-Consequence* (*If [+cause]*). Neither the binary nature of the relations nor the semantic distinctions among them receives attention. To add to the potential confusion, a second table, this time headed

⁶¹ There are also some comments at the side of the reading texts that relate to cohesive devices that signal discourse/ semantic relations. Thus, for example, *For these reasons* begins the final paragraph of a text on p. 14. A side comment linked to this phrase reads as follows: "Check back to identify the reasons. Number them." Similarly, *the following* appears as a side comment in connection with a text on p. 23: "Cause and effect marker! Underline the cause and highlight two effects".

Cause and Effect markers (p. 18) includes twelve nouns and sixteen verbs/ verb phrases.

In another table headed *Assessment markers* (p. 75), there are a number of nouns (e.g. *defect; fallacy*) and verbs (e.g. *defective; (in)correct; mistaken*) signalling positive or negative evaluation. However, no reference is made to the fact that these are often used in the context of the binary relations of *Simple Comparison, Simple Contrast, Statement-Affirmation* and *Statement-Denial*.

Table 4.6: *Cause and Effect markers (Pakenham, 2005, p.18)*

NOUNS		VERBS/ VERB PHRASES	
<i>cause</i>	<i>influence</i>	<i>to affect</i>	<i>to create</i>
<i>connection</i>	<i>origin</i>	<i>to attribute to</i>	<i>to force</i>
<i>consequence</i>	<i>outcome</i>	<i>to be associated with</i>	<i>to give rise to</i>
<i>effect</i>	<i>reason</i>	<i>to be responsible for</i>	<i>to lead to</i>
<i>factor</i>	<i>relationship</i>	<i>to blame</i>	<i>to play a part in</i>
<i>impact</i>		<i>to bring about</i>	<i>to produce</i>
		<i>to cause</i>	<i>to result from</i>
		<i>to contribute to</i>	<i>to result in</i>

So far as the underlying syllabus is concerned, there is some evidence that account has been taken of the importance of inferencing based on a combination of text, context and existing knowledge and of combining top-down and bottom-up processing in the context of contextual clues. However, while there is also evidence that content schemata (involving background knowledge of the content area of the text) have been accommodated, there is little evidence that any attention has been paid to formal schemata (including the overall rhetorical structuring of texts written in different discourse modes/ genres). Nevertheless, the author has clearly been influenced to a considerable extent in planning the work by the desire to incorporate reading strategies such as predicting, guessing the meaning of words from context, scanning and skimming and recognition/ identification of the semantic clues provided by a range of cohesive devices.

4.4 Widely used English language textbooks designed for adult and young adult learners: Overview and discussion

4.4.1 General English language textbooks

So far as widely used General English language textbooks designed for adult learners are concerned, there appears to have been a gradual movement away from the concept of a strictly structural syllabus in which individual grammatical items are presented sequentially and in a decontextualized way and in which vocabulary plays a secondary role. This movement began in the mid-1960s with movements towards the *situationalization*, *lexicalization* and *incipient functionalization* of the structural syllabus. The beginning of this trend, detectable in both *Situational English* (The Commonwealth Office of Education, 1965) and *New Concept English* (Alexander, 1967), while, initially at least, having little significant impact on the selection and organization of structural content, did have some impact, particularly in the early stages of language learning when (a) the mini-dialogues in which new aspects of language were typically presented were characterized by the inclusion of some frequently occurring formulaic realizations of a limited range of functions (such as greetings and introductions), and (b) the inclusion of vocabulary that, while not necessarily always marked by frequency of occurrence, was nevertheless considered to be of fundamental importance (such as days of the week, colour and everyday objects). This is, presumably, what Alexander (1976) had in mind when he observed that while there had been, over the past twenty years, "a significant move away from grammar translation methods towards the almost universal adoption of structural grading in published language courses" (p. 89), there had also been some further 'slight shifts in emphasis' which included linking "the familiar idea of structural grading . . . to a functional syllabus" and selecting items "in terms of their potential immediate and practical application" (p. 94).

A major new trend, detectable from the mid-1970s, was a more thoroughgoing attempt at *functionalization* of the syllabus. In fact, by that time, textbooks which claimed to be more functionally than structurally-oriented were beginning to emerge. There was, however, an initial tendency to interpret the term 'function' in a very wide sense, one that (mistakenly) included both semantic and pragmatic

aspects of meaning. This often included categorizing topics that were introduced by 'saying verbs' (e.g. 'ask'; 'talk about') under the heading of functions. In general, however, even in the case of textbooks whose authors claimed to subordinate structural to functional organization, structural considerations continued to play an important role. Thus, for example, while the authors of *Strategies* (Abbs, Ayton & Freebairn, 1977 & 1979), claimed that the approach taken to the design of the series was "functional rather than structural" and that "[t]he structural contents [had] been selected as being appropriate to the particular function rather than as an unrelated series of structures arranged in order of supposed linguistic difficulty", they also observed, in the context of a 1990s edition of the series, that "the more important structures of the language", those that were "considered to be most suited to the linguistic level of the learner" were covered "in a graded sequence" (Abbs, Ayton & Freebairn, 1995b, p. iv).

Towards the end of the 1970s, there was beginning to be evidence of a greater awareness among textbook writers of the distinction between semantic and pragmatic meanings and of the unavoidable relationship in the case of functions between language and context. This tended to be accompanied by greater circumspection in relation to references to functions. In addition, the notional aspect of the notional syllabus design concept as articulated by Wilkins (1976) tended to continue to be largely ignored, with decisions about which linguistic structures to include apparently often being made in relation to their perceived relevance to particular functions rather than on the basis of the desirability of students being able to express certain structurally encoded meanings (notions). Thus, for example, with reference to *Main course English*, Garton-Sprenger, Jupp and Prowse (1979) noted that the structural aspect of the course arose out of "the examples of the language functions", with "particular examples of the functions [being] selected on the basis of the range of use and of linguistic simplicity and structural grading". Thus, notwithstanding the surface appearance of situationalized functional specification, the reality generally was that many of the decision-making criteria that has typically guided structurally-focused syllabuses remained largely in place. Thus, with the exception of some commonly occurring functions that tend to be formulaically encoded (e.g. *greetings* and *introductions*)

or frequently occurring ones that are typically associated with particular construction-types (e.g. *offering*), the emphasis was on major generic functions (e.g. *asking* and *explaining*) which were generally linked to topic specifications in a way that constrained functional realizations and provided the authors with a situational context in which they could highlight particular aspects of structure and vocabulary (e.g. *Asking and explaining about personal past history*). This had the effect of creating the impression of a greater orientation towards functional specification than was actually the case.

This approach to syllabus specification was largely continued throughout the 1980s and beyond, with a tendency to prioritize structural progression while *appearing to* place major emphasis on functional (or notional-functional) orientation - see, for example, *Network* (Eastwood, Kay, Mackin & Strevens, 1980), in which there is a clear indication of an attempt to claim alignment with the work of the Council of Europe (through references to 'notions', 'functions' and 'the T-level') while retaining what is essentially a largely situationalized structurally-oriented syllabus. Thus:

We are fully aware of the work leading to the Council of Europe *Waystage* and *Threshold Level* and right from the start we decided that the notions and functions included in the T-level should be covered in this course. At the same time we decided . . . not to make notions and functions the dominant feature and particularly not to neglect grammatical structures.

Eastwood et al, 1980, p. 9.

Into the 1990s and beyond, the type of hybrid, *situationalized* syllabus that we have seen emerging - one in which structural, functional and lexical specifications were integrated in a variety of different ways - continued to develop. There was, however, evidence of a growing tendency to place less emphasis on functional specification (and sometimes also on structural specification) and more on lexical specification, and to add into the mix a range of discourse features and, in some cases, skills and sub-skills (including learning skills)⁶². Thus, for example, the

⁶² In the area of methodology, an increased focus on a wide variety of task-types was in evidence.

syllabus underpinning *Headway Intermediate* (Soars & Soars, 1996) has been described as being 'perfectly-balanced', 'topic-based' and as having 'a strong grammar' and 'clear vocabulary' focus (ELT catalogue online: visited 8 October, 2013), while *New Cutting Edge* (Moor & Cunningham, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2010) has been described as having a 'comprehensive' syllabus that focuses on "grammar, vocabulary and skills work" (Pearson Longman online: *New cutting edge* (visited 8 October 2013)). In both *Headway Intermediate* and *Landmark* (Haines, & Stewart, 2000), functional specifications are given a minor role, being limited to sections labelled 'Postscript' in the former and 'Language in action' in the latter. In the case of *Headway Intermediate*, those few functions which are included (e.g. *giving opinions; making suggestions; complaining*) do not appear in the contents list and bear no clear relation to other aspects of the syllabus.

In *New Cutting Edge*, the design principles underlying the syllabus are readily detectable and there is a clear structural focus running throughout the series. In the case of both *Landmark* and *Headway Intermediate*, however, the situation is rather different, with what may be emerging as the beginning of a new trend in syllabus design being in evidence, that is, a tendency towards abandoning the careful integration of the various components of the syllabus in favour of a more loosely integrated, topically/thematically-focused framework. In *Headway Intermediate*, the underlying syllabus often appears disjointed, even haphazard, with the various components, even within single units, appearing to bear little other than a broadly thematic relationship to one another. In *Landmark*, the categorization of language indicators (which appear in a number of different sections within units) is frequently inconsistent and potentially confusing, with structural, lexical or semantic labelling, or a combination of structural and semantic labelling, appearing to be largely unmotivated by any detectable theoretically or pedagogically-driven considerations. In addition, in the case of *Landmark*, those language forms to which particular attention is directed are by no means always more frequently occurring, more structurally complex or more semantically nuanced than other language forms that also appear in the texts included. What this appears to reflect is an orientation towards what Long (1988)

has referred to as a 'focus on form' (as opposed to 'forms'), that is, a focus on those structures that emerge in texts *as they emerge* rather than on particular pre-selected structures. A potential danger here is that that this type of 'focus on form' will, in the context of textbooks that highlight situationally-based texts/ dialogues, result in an approach that is, in an overall sense, very similar to certain aspects of grammar translation (but without the translation component).

In *Headway*, *Landmark* and *New Cutting Edge*, those texts that are not conversation-centered are largely in recount/ narrative mode or description/ classification mode, with little attention being paid to other discourse modes. There is, nevertheless, evidence in all three cases of an incipient awareness of the importance of some aspects of discourse construction and comprehension, particularly in the attention that is paid in a number of places to some cohesive devices.

A rather different trend and less pervasive trend also began to emerge towards the end of the 1980s, one in which the impact of corpus-based research began to be in evidence in a number of English language textbooks. Two notable examples are *The Collins COBUILD English Course* (Willis & Willis, 1989) and *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005 & 2006), both of which prioritize spoken discourse. Whereas the first of these was promoted as being 'corpus-based' and as being underpinned by a primarily lexical syllabus (with aspects of a task-based one), the second is promoted as being 'corpus informed' and as being underpinned by a syllabus made up of words, phrases, and grammar used in everyday situations combined with a range of conversation management strategies.

The Collins COBUILD English Course focused in large measure on those words and phrases that had been found to occur most frequently in the Collins Birmingham University International Language Database and /or to be among those that made up 80% of that corpus. There is, in that course, considerable focus on aspects of spontaneous conversation such as hesitations and fillers. Although the course was generally promoted as being based primarily on what was referred

to as a 'lexical syllabus', one of its authors has observed that it is also "probably the first task-based course book". In fact, there is also a relatively a strong grammar focus (in the 'language study' and 'grammar' sections), that component, however, emerging out of texts that are chosen on the basis of their lexical content and being, therefore, subordinated to it. Here, structures no longer provide the pre-eminent form of sequencing. As in the case of *Landmark*, there is evidence of a 'focus on form', with some selected structures that appear in texts (in this case, texts chosen in relation primarily to their lexical focus) receiving attention *as they emerge*. In this context, it is important to bear in mind the fact that Skehan (1996, p. 42), in connection, in particular, with task-based course specification, has drawn attention to the potential dangers associated with a lack of emphasis on "the powerful generative system" of language in favour of "memory-based processing". It is also relevant to bear in mind Sheen's (2003) observation that 'focus on form' was becoming "a myth in the making" which could be used to support "unjustified reforms" (pp. 225 & 232). While a growing awareness of the importance of vocabulary in language learning has been increasingly evident in English language textbooks, there appears to have been no further attempt to design a general English language textbook on the basis of a primarily lexical syllabus. Among the possible reasons for this are (a) the perception that lexically-based syllabuses are not conducive to that systematization which, as Brumfit (1980, p. 3) has observed, appears to be a critical aspect of language learning, and (b) the perception that they do not provide adequately for a 'grammatical core' which, as Alexander (1976, p. 94) has noted, is "indispensable for all forms of communication".

In the case of *Touchstone*, these dangers are avoided in that the underlying syllabus includes, in addition to a lexical and conversational management skills focus, a focus on grammatical constructions and their meanings, which, because the syllabus is 'corpus-informed' rather than strictly 'corpus-based', includes not only those structures that were found, in the Cambridge International Corpus, to be 'the most widely used' but also those considered to be 'the most useful' (*Touchstone 1, Teacher's edition*, p. iv). Although language functions *do* appear in places throughout the series and although there *is* a section headed *Functions/*

Topics in each unit, the gradual move away from functional specification that has been in evidence since the 1980s is once again detectable, the sense in which the term 'functions' is used often being a very general one that includes, for example, phrases introduced by verbs of saying (e.g. 'Talk about . . . '). Once again, while there is a focus from time to time on aspects of discourse construction, this is largely confined to a limited number of cohesive devices that link clauses and sentences, with the overall rhetorical structuring of written texts receiving little attention and with the dominant discourse mode in the case of written texts being recount/ narration.

While there has been considerable emphasis in the literature on language teaching on task-based syllabuses, the writers of general English language textbooks produced by major publishing houses have shown little enthusiasm for task-based syllabus design. Even so, a listening course intended for low intermediate to intermediate students who had "studied some English but who lack[ed] the ability to follow conversational American English on everyday topics" (Richards, Gordon & Harper, 1987, p. iii) which was based, in part at least, on a task-based syllabus was produced by Oxford University Press in the late 1980s (Richards, Gordon & Harper, 1987). In fact, however, the syllabus underpinning this work is not exclusively task-based: the texts are "organized around a topic and related functions" (the functions being, once again, often very general ones) and 'Starting out' sections that provide "some of the . . . language that is needed in order to understand conversations" are included (p. iii). This, together with the fact that many 'tactics' sections are primarily structurally oriented, clearly had a major impact on the nature of the tasks to be undertaken, tasks which are mainly of a type (including those that involve listening strategies) that had, by the 1980s, become fairly standard in general English language textbooks. Overall, this textbook would appear to be *largely* concerned with language practice rather than proficiency development, although aspects of conversational language with which most students are unlikely to be already familiar are introduced.

4.4.2 EAP textbooks

Although the concept of specific purposes courses had begun to emerge much earlier, textbooks designed largely for students for whom English was not a first

language but who are studying, or intending to study through the medium of English did not begin to appear in significant numbers until towards the end of the penultimate decade of the 20th century. Almost all of them are predicated on the assumption that the students for whom they are intended will already have a reasonably firm grasp of English but will require some assistance in adapting to the requirements of studying through the medium of the language. Most focus on writing. Also, the vast majority are intended for use by students from a range of academic disciplines and therefore concentrate largely on language, skills and, in some cases, overarching rhetorical structures that are cross-disciplinary in nature (such as problem-solution) although there are some, such as *Academic encounters: Life in society* (Brown & Hood, 2008), that focus on specific discipline areas. The extent to which these textbooks reflect research on the use of English in academic contexts varies considerably, as does the extent to which they reflect research in the area of discourse analysis more generally.

Academic Writing for Graduate Students (Swales & Feak, 1994) begins by exploring the relationship between text as product and a range of considerations that impinge on decision-making, such as audience, purpose and authorial positioning. It includes texts from a range of academic areas, almost half involving the *classification/ description* discourse mode and almost one quarter involving *argument*, with the remainder involving some combination of *recount* and *argument* or *classification/ description, argument, explanation* and *instruction*. In addition to a focus on discourse modes, the text highlights generic cross-disciplinary organizational structures (general/ particular and problem/solution), vocabulary typically used in academic contexts, cohesive devices that link various types of relation between clauses and sentences, and a number of aspects of clause/ sentence level structure as well as a range of skills and sub-skills. There is also a more specific focus on three particular text types - summaries, critiques and research papers. *English in today's research world* (Swales & Feak, 2000) is similar in many respects but focuses on conference abstracts and conference posters and literature reviews rather than including a more general focus on summaries and critiques. In both cases, the underlying syllabus is discourse-based, being made up of a blend of a number of cross-

disciplinary rhetorical, lexical, grammatical and cohesive aspects of coherent texts exhibited within the context of a variety of discourse modes and a more limited range of text-types. A similar situation obtains in the case of *Academic writing course: Study skills in English* (Jordan, 2002) in which, in spite of some categorical confusion, the underlying design principles are very similar, the textbook materials being based on a discourse-centred syllabus that prioritizes discourse mode/genre and relates discussion of skills and sub-skills, lexis and syntax to that framework through a focus on cohesion.

In common with the three textbooks to which reference has been made in this section, *Writing academic English* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991) includes a focus on cohesive devices (treated, however, in a way that fails to discriminate adequately among their different semantic functions) and is oriented towards cross-disciplinary aspects of text construction. There are, however, some major differences relating, in particular, to its greater focus on the overall structuring of paragraphs, and its primary orientation, in terms of rhetorical structuring, towards a single text-type (the academic essay) and, in terms of internal structuring, towards two discourse modes – *classification/ description* and *argument*, which are treated as if they were essay types rather than more general discourse modes, something that results in considerable category confusion. While the underlying syllabus is similar in type to that of the other two texts discussed (although with a different overall focus), there are significant problems relating to a failure to discriminate adequately among various rhetorical and semantico-pragmatic categories. Similar problems are detectable in the case of *Writers at work* (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmiz, 2008) which also focuses on a single text-type (the essay). Once again, although an attempt has clearly been made to base this textbook on a discourse-centred syllabus similar in type to that of *Writing for Graduate Students* and *English in today's research world*, the extent of the categorical confusion that underlies the textbook's design leads to a number of serious inconsistencies and contradictions.

Unlike the other textbooks discussed in this section, *Making connections* (Pakenham, 2005) has a primary focus on reading and each unit includes texts that

are thematically linked. In spite of its extensive treatment of reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, it is based on syllabus design principles that are very similar to those that underpin the first three textbooks discussed, that is, its underlying syllabus is discourse-based, with a primary focus on cross-disciplinary lexical, grammatical and cohesive aspects of coherent texts exhibited within the context of a variety of discourse modes. There is, however, in this case, once again, as in the case of *Writing academic English* and *Writers at work*, a focus on a single text-type (*the essay*) and no explicit reference is made to the overall rhetorical structuring of texts.

4.5 Conclusion

With very few exceptions, the writers of commercially available English language textbooks that have been produced since the mid-1960s make no *direct* reference to specific syllabus design proposals, although there are several references to the fact that the syllabuses underpinning these textbooks include structures, vocabulary, functions and/or skills and several to a 'balanced' approach to syllabus design. The exceptions to this include some textbooks that appeared in the 1970s and 1980s that were based largely on the authors' interpretation of the functional component of the notional syllabus design proposal (e.g. *Strategies*) and some that have been written or co-written by those who have been directly involved in proposing a particular approach to syllabus design (e.g. *The Collins COBUILD English Course*).

So far as general English language textbooks are concerned, textbook writers appear currently, in general, to traverse the complex terrain of syllabus design in broadly similar ways. The main trend appears to be to design hybrid situationalized, task-supported syllabuses in which a roughly equivalent weighting is given to lexis and grammar, with some consideration also being given to functional specification (often very general functions and/or formulaically encoded functions), skills and sub-skills and, in some cases, conversational management and/or learning strategies and some aspects of cohesion. There are, however, exceptions, one example being *Landmark*, in which the concept of any clearly organized structural progression appears to have been abandoned as one of the syllabus design principles in favour of an approach that allows for

considerable flexibility in relation to which structures are included at particular stages, with only some of those that are included at particular points being highlighted. In general, a primary focus on the language associated with everyday spoken interaction is evident, with written text being given less attention and being represented largely in terms of the narrative/recount and descriptive/classificatory modes and the rhetorical structuring of written texts being largely overlooked. However, in spite of many similarities, the extent to which textbook writers draw upon pedagogically-oriented research varies considerably, as does the overall ordering and coverage at different levels and the extent to which their decision-making appears to be based on coherent, theoretically-grounded principles.

In the case of textbooks that focus on English for academic purposes, the underlying syllabus tends to be discourse-based, being generally made up of a blend of a number of cross-disciplinary lexical, grammatical and cohesive aspects of coherent texts exhibited within the context of a variety of discourse modes and a more limited range of text-types, and sometimes also including explicit discussion of the rhetorical structuring/ macropatterning of texts and/or a range of skills and sub-skills. There are, however, major differences that relate, in particular, to the extent to which the authors appear to be aware of various aspects of research on discourse analysis generally and, in particular, genre and text-type and, therefore, the extent to which categorical confusion, with associated inconsistencies and contradictions, is avoided.

Chapter Five

Reporting on a questionnaire-based survey

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on a survey of teachers of English as an additional language in five different countries (Japan, Taiwan, Syria, Australia and New Zealand). It begins with an outline of the main aims of the survey (5.2) and the nature, development and trialling of the survey instrument (a self-completion questionnaire) and its distribution and collection (5.3). This is followed by a summary (5.4) and discussion (5.5) of the data collected and a conclusion section (5.6).

5.2 Main aims of the survey

In determining the main aims of the survey, careful consideration was given to the overall aim of the research project as a whole, part of which was to seek to determine the extent to which proposals relating to L2 syllabus design have had an impact on the decisions made by English language teachers and language programme managers/ co-ordinators working in a tertiary education context. Consistent with this overall research aim, a decision was made to investigate:

- (a) how a sample of those involved in the teaching of English as a second/additional language specify course objectives and organize and plan their course content;
- (b) whether, and to what extent, they incorporate aspects of discourse construction and comprehension into their courses;
- (c) whether they were provided with syllabuses for the courses they taught and whether they believed that it was important to have syllabuses (either provided for them or developed by them);
- (d) whether they believed that it was necessary/ important to ensure that the language courses that students took were integrated with/ related to one another;
- (e) whether they used textbooks and, if so, how they selected them;

- (f) in which of a number of specified areas, including syllabus design, they believed they would benefit from further training/ development; and
- (g) whether they believed that changes and developments in approaches to the language curriculum had had a positive impact in specified areas.

5.3 Nature, development and trialling of the survey instrument

5.3.1 Survey instrument

In determining the survey approach to be adopted, a number of issues needed to be taken into consideration. These included issues relating to time, cost and coverage. In order to attempt to ensure that the data collected was from as many potential participants as possible and involved as little time and cost as possible⁶³, I decided that a questionnaire-based survey was the best option available to me. However, analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that a number of important decisions relating to the language curriculum were made by programme co-ordinators and programme managers. I therefore decided that it would be useful to conduct semi-structured interviews involving programme co-ordinators and programme managers (see *Chapter 6*).

5.3.2 The target population

The target population was teachers of English as a second/ additional language in schools and language centres in New Zealand and overseas. A decision to target teachers in Australia, Taiwan, Japan and Syria in addition to teachers in New Zealand was related to the fact that I had contact with language teaching professionals in these countries who were prepared to assist with the distribution of questionnaires (as was also the case in New Zealand). The sample was, therefore, one of convenience.

5.3.3 The draft questionnaire

In deciding on the content of the draft questionnaire, consideration was given to a number of factors, including: (a) the desirability of collecting background information of a professional nature (e.g. types of course taught); (b) the potential

⁶³ Time was an important consideration in view of the fact that I was employed on a full-time basis.

usefulness, given the nature of the changes and developments that have taken place in English language teaching over recent decades, of comparative data (e.g. whether participants were currently more or less confident about deciding what they should teach in a core language development course than they were when they began teaching); (c) the potential relevance in relation to the thesis as a whole of including questions not only about the practices of participants in relation to various aspects of course design (and delivery) but also about their attitudes and beliefs. In connection with considerations relating to ease of data entry and analysis, I also decided to include very few open questions (while nevertheless providing participants with an opportunity to add comments in several places should they choose to do so).

The draft questionnaire included 31 questions, of which 27 were closed. The overall orientation of the questions (apart from the final one which simply invited comments) was as indicated below:

- background information of a professional nature (6 questions);
- issues relating to the design, content and integration of curricula and curriculum elements (17);
- issues relating to course outcomes (2 questions);
- issues relating to textbook selection (4);
- in-service development preferences (1 question).

The questions called for a combination of factually-oriented and attitude-based and opinion-based responses.

5.3.4 Consideration of ethical issues

A requirement of the University of Waikato is that all research involving human subjects should be vetted by the appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Research Ethics Committee, School of Māori and Pacific Development, University of Waikato). Consequently, the draft questionnaire and the proposed

covering letter were submitted for approval. In accordance with recommendations included in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000, p. 259), the cover sheet (see *Appendix 1: Questionnaire and covering letter*) indicated:

- the overall aim of the questionnaire;
- a guarantee of anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of individual responses;
- an assurance that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants need not answer all of the questions;
- an outline of the ways in which findings would be reported.

Members of the Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the documentation provided.

5.3.5 Piloting the draft questionnaire and producing a final version

The questionnaire was given to three language teachers to complete and provide feedback. Based on their feedback, a number of changes were made. These included: (a) the provision of space for comments in relation to 14 of the questions; (b) the addition of two questions relating to perceptions of the impact of changes/ developments in methodology and syllabus design (*Question 7 and 8*); and (c) the addition of examples of semantic relations in connection with *Question 13*. The final version of the questionnaire was presented in an A2 size booklet format.

5.3.6 Distribution and collection of the questionnaire

Questionnaires and reply paid envelopes were handed or mailed to contacts (teachers of English as a second/ additional language) with a request that they complete and return one and pass as many as possible of the remainder on to colleagues (in the same institution or in different ones), requesting further copies if required. Of the 220 questionnaires distributed, 93 were returned either fully or partially completed (a 42% response rate). Of these, 37 were from teachers working in New Zealand, 22 from teachers working in Taiwan, 18 from teachers working in Japan, 12 from teachers working in Australia and 4 from teachers working in Syria.

5.3.7 Determination of the procedures to be used in recording and analysing responses

Each of the 93 questionnaire booklets returned was allocated a number. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows, Version 13 was used for data entry and analysis purposes. Responses were entered into an SPSS database and descriptive analysis and independent sample t-tests were employed. A number of cross-tabulations were conducted to correlate the responses to certain questions (e.g. number of years of teaching (*Question 2*) and decisions relating to the inclusion (or otherwise) of cohesive devices in core language development courses (*Question 12*).

5.4 The data

Note that all numbers and percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest 0.5.

5.4.1 Background information

Question 1 was designed to determine whether participants taught in what are commonly referred to as ‘ESL’ or ‘EFL’ contexts⁶⁴. Participants were asked whether they taught students who:

- (i) currently live permanently or semi-permanently in a country where English is the first language (ESL context); or
- (ii) currently live in a country where English is not the first language (EFL context).

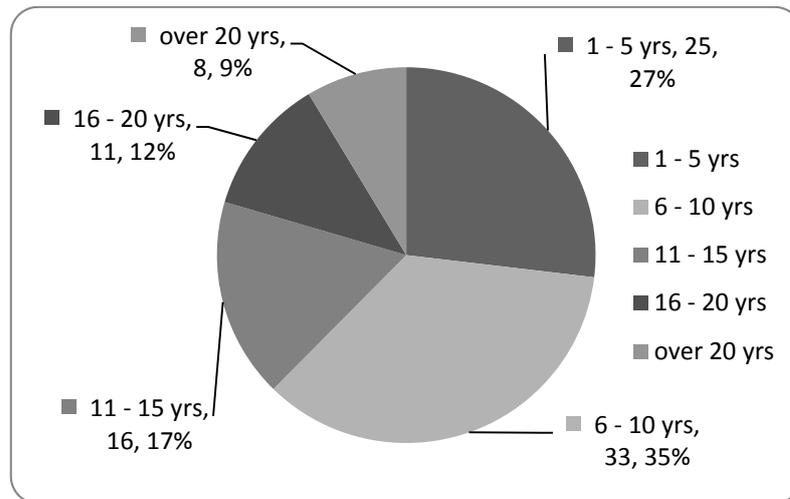
Of the 93 respondents to this question, 55 selected (i) above and 38 selected (ii) above. This suggests that there was a problem associated with this question: as 44 of the participants were teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria, one would expect at least 44 to have selected (ii). There clearly should have been an alternative to (i) and (ii) that referred to contexts in which students were living temporarily (for a specified maximum period) in a country where English is the first language of the

⁶⁴ As indicated in *Chapters 1* and *2*, this terminology is much less useful now than it was before globalization began to have a major impact on the use and distribution of English throughout the world.

majority of the population. For this reason, responses to *Question 1* are not taken into consideration in the discussion. Instead, where it seems useful to identify the responses of those teaching in what is clearly an environment in which English is not the majority language, reference is made to the responses of participants from Japan, Syria and Taiwan. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that only five of those working in an ESL context were employed by secondary schools. All of the others were employed by language centres which are, in most cases, attached to tertiary institutions. These language centres offer both what are referred to as ‘general English’ courses and what are referred to as ‘academic English’ courses, the former often including short ‘holiday English’ courses.

Question 2 asked the number of years participants had taught English as an additional language (EAL) (see *Figure 5.1* below).

Figure 5.1: Number of years (in bands) respondents have taught EAL



Question 3 asked whether participants taught a core language development course (that is, a course where the focus is on overall language development rather than a specific skill or skills). *Question 4* asked participants whether they were more or less confident now about what they should teach in a core language development course than they were when they began teaching (see *Figures 5.2* and *5.3* below).

Figure 5.2: *Teaching a core development course*

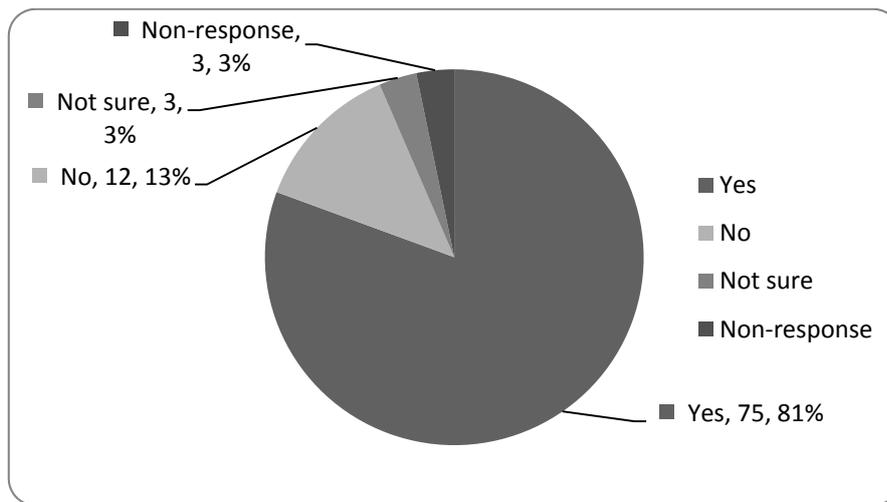
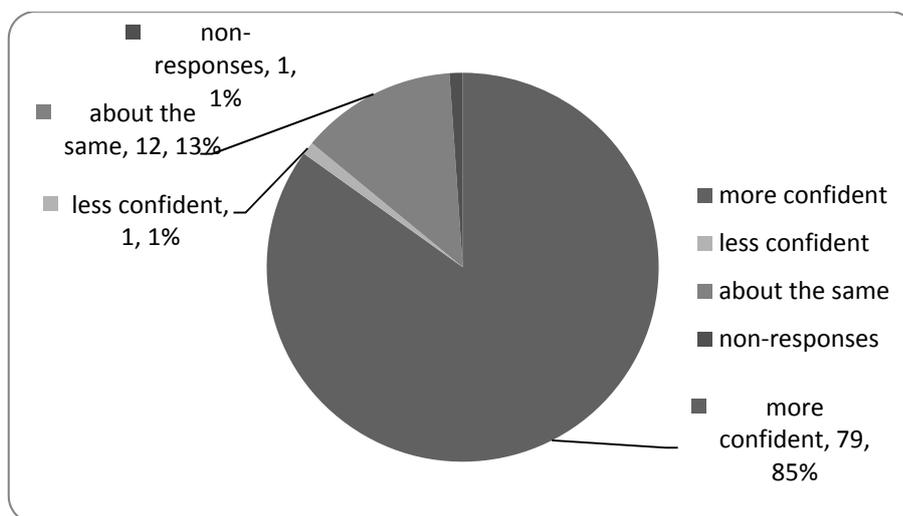


Figure 5.3: *More confident about content than when began teaching*



Only 7 (16%) of those teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria and 5 (10%) of those teaching in New Zealand or Australia indicated that they were *not* involved in teaching a core language development course. Of the 12 who indicated that they were less confident now about what they should include in a core language development course than they were when they began teaching, 11 were teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria.

Thirteen (13) respondents chose to add a comment (see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be categorised as follows:

- emphasising the positive impact of experience or training (x5);
- indication that the courses respondent taught combined skills (x4);
- indication that respondent's views had changed over time or as a result of peer challenge (x2);
- belief that the lack of skills integration in courses respondent taught was limiting (x1);
- indication that the responses provided related only to the level taught, that is, elementary level (x1).

Some sample comments are included below. Here and elsewhere in this chapter, comments by participants working in New Zealand and Australia are in italic print.

Experience helps me understand better.

University X courses helped a lot. PG Diploma and Masters.

More knowledge but with more knowledge has come more questions.

Question 5 asked whether participants taught any skill-specific courses, such as reading skills or writing skills. *Question 6* asked participants whether they were currently more or less confident about what to teach in a writing course than they were when they began teaching (see *Figures 5.4* and *5.5* for a summary of responses).

Figure 5.4: *Teaching a skills-specific course*

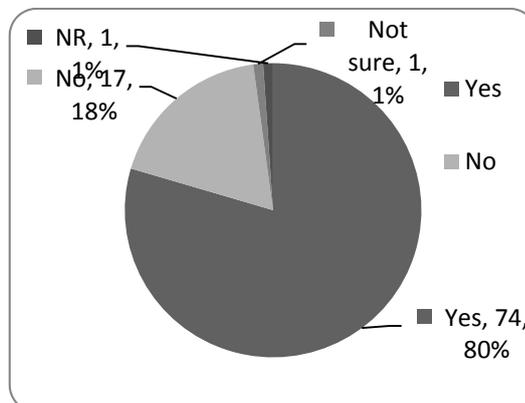
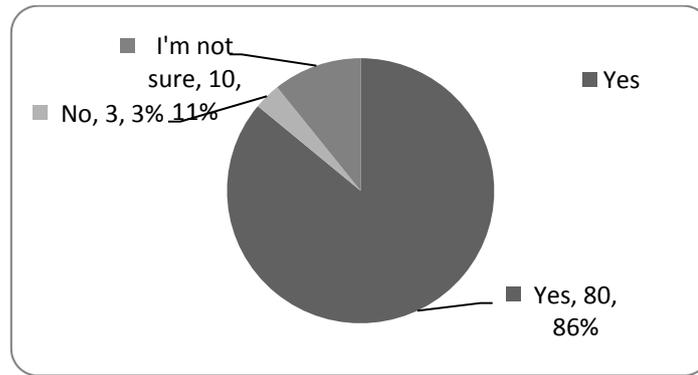


Figure 5.5: *More confident about content of writing courses than when began teaching*



Sixteen (16) respondents chose to add comments in connection with *Question 6* (see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). The responses are categorized below:

- indication that the respondent had become more confident, which, in seven cases, was said to be the result of training (x8);
- indication that low student motivation impacted negatively on teacher confidence (x1).

There were six (6) further comments. Of these, two (2) related to the type of course taught; one (1) indicated that students needed more grammar practice; one (1) indicated that writing and translation are related; one (1) indicated that a particular training course had not helped much; and one (1) indicated that the respondent lacked experience of teaching writing. Some sample comments are included below:

I felt like I was faking it a bit until I did the courses at X university.

Although my Masters didn't help much.

In my experience so far, I have taught very little writing.

Question 7 asked whether participants believed that changes in methodology that had taken place over the last twenty years had generally led to more relaxed and confident learners. *Question 8* asked whether they believed that changes in

syllabus design in English language teaching that had taken place over the last twenty years had generally led to increased standards of proficiency among learners. Responses are summarised in *Figures 5.6* and *5.7* below.

Figure 5.6: *Believe changes in methodology over last 20 yrs. have led to more confident learners*

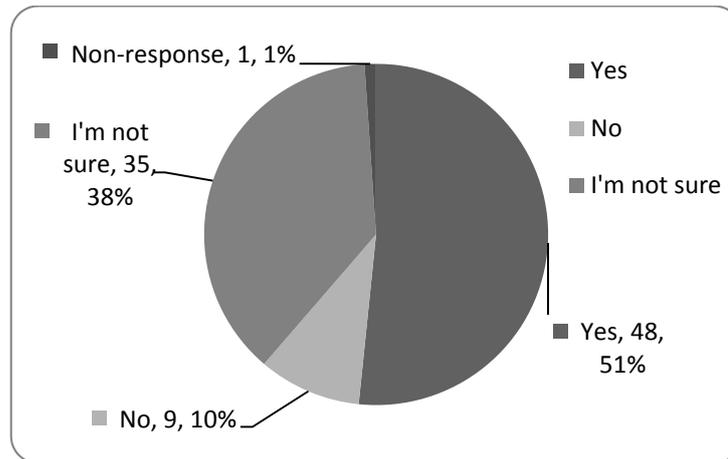
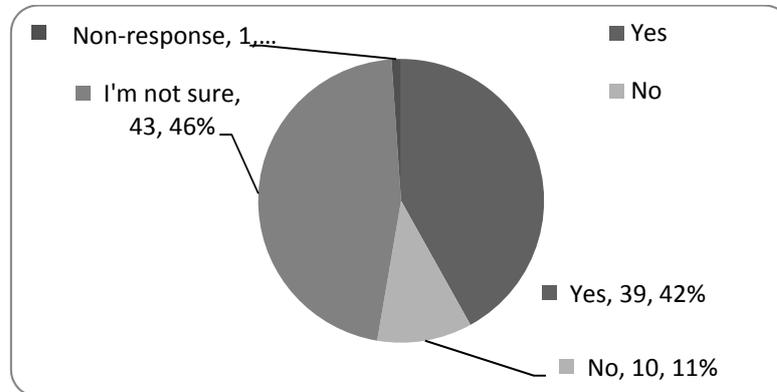


Figure 5.7: *Believe changes in syllabus design over last 20 yrs. have led to increased learner proficiency*



Twenty-one (21) respondents chose to add comments following *Question 8*⁶⁵ (see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). In two cases, the comment provided by one person has been split up, with different parts being recorded in two different sections of the *Table*. Nine (9) of the comments related to the difficulty of making an informed judgment which, in four (4) cases was linked to length of teaching experience; four (4) of the comments related to

⁶⁵ Participants were not invited to add comments directly after Question 7 but a number of comments which related to Question 7 were added to the invited comments section of Question 8.

methodology rather than, or in addition to syllabus design; two (2) of the comments indicated that students were less proficient in grammar (x1) or grammar and vocabulary (x1). Of the remaining six (6) comments, five (5) referred to issues specific to the contexts in which the respondents taught (e.g. *too much time is spent meeting standards, not enough time teaching*) and one indicated a lack of knowledge in the area of syllabus design. Some sample comments are included below:

I'm not sure because of my short and limited teaching experience.

Not having been teaching 20 years ago, I can't really compare.

No one seems qualified to answer 7 and 8 – question is not scientific.

More proficient in speaking and less proficient in grammar.

Yes - in terms of communicative ability, not necessarily in vocabulary or grammar use knowledge & control.

Relaxed probably, confident - not sure.

For us, we need a team and a leader to teach us 'syllabus design' and also carry on the idea in our courses.

Sorry I know quite a little about syllabus design.

Question 9 asked participants to indicate which of a series of statements relating to syllabus design/ course content they believed to be true. *Table 5.1* summarizes the responses. In each case, the total number and percentage is recorded in the top line, followed in the second line by the number teaching in Australia or New Zealand and the percentage of those teaching in those countries.

Table 5.1: Agreement/ disagreement with statements about syllabus design, lesson planning and textbooks

Statement	Agree		Disagree		Not relevant in my situation		No response
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
It's best to be clear about what you want to teach in each lesson before you begin although you may have to adapt in response to the students' ability to cope.	92/ 49	98.9/ 100	1/ 0	1.1/ 0	0/ 0	0/ 0	
It's best not to plan too much in advance so that you can respond to student needs as they arise.	30/ 14	32.3/ 28.5	58/ 30	62.4/ 61	3/ 3	3.2/ 100	2/ 1
It's best to structure lessons around tasks that involve language rather than structuring lessons around specific language that you want to teach.	30/ 14	32.3/ 28.5	51/ 28	54.8/ 57	1/ 1	1.1/ 100	11/ 6
It's best to structure lessons around the specific language that you want to teach rather than around tasks, although tasks should be included in lessons.	53/ 30	57/ 61	28/ 13	30.1/ 26.5	1/ 1	1.1/ 100	11/ 5
I think it is very important to have a syllabus for each course that I teach.	82/ 41	88.2/ 43	8/ 6	8.6/ 12	1/ 1	1.1/ 100	2/ 1
I choose textbooks after I have decided on my syllabus and these textbooks reflect my syllabus.	33/ 21	35.5/ 43	20/ 5	21.5/ 10	38/ 21	40.9/ 43	2/ 2
I select interesting textbooks at an appropriate level for my students and they determine the syllabus.	20/ 7	21.5/ 14	38/ 23	40.9/ 47	30/ 15	32.3/ 31	5/ 4
At beginner and elementary level, I prefer to focus on words and sentences rather than on larger stretches of language. This makes it easier for students to cope.	40/ 24	43/ 49	39/ 15	41.9/ 31	12/ 8	12.9/ 16	2/ 2

The responses to *Question 9* indicate that a considerable majority of the participants (88%) believe that it is important to have a syllabus for each of the courses they teach. Of the eight (8) who did not, six (6) were teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria.

There were two questions designed to determine whether participants had a preference for task-based or for task-supported learning. In each case, twelve (12)

of the ninety three (93) participants either did not respond to these questions (11) or indicated that they believed them not to be relevant in their case (1). Of the remaining eighty one (81) participants, fifty three (53/65%) indicated that they agreed with the following statement: *It is best to structure lessons around the specific language that you want to teach rather than around tasks, although tasks should be included in lessons* (47% of those teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria; 68% of those teaching in Australia or New Zealand). Thirty (30) of the eighty one (81/ 37%) indicated that they agreed with the statement: *It's best to structure lessons around tasks that involve language rather than structuring lessons around specific language that you want to teach* (47% of those teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria; 68% of those teaching in Australia or New Zealand). Allowance needs to be made for non-responses and the slight discrepancy between responses to these two statements (which appears to indicate some degree of uncertainty in some cases).

Almost all of the participants (92) indicated their support for the statement: *It's best to be clear about what you want to teach in each lesson before you begin although you may have to adapt in response to the students' ability to cope*. Although this may appear, at first sight, to be inconsistent with the fact that thirty (30) of the participants indicated that they believed that it was best not to plan too much in advance so that they could respond to student needs as they arose, it seems likely that at least some of the respondents were, in this case, thinking of planning as it relates to the sequencing and timing of activities within lessons, etc.

Two of the statements related to the interaction between syllabus design and textbook selection. In each case, more than one third of the participants indicated that the question was not relevant in their situation. Of those who agreed or disagreed with the statements (53 in one case; 58 in the other), the majority indicated that they decided on their syllabus first and then selected textbooks that reflected that syllabus. Even so, twenty (20) of the respondents indicated that they selected interesting textbooks at an appropriate level and let these textbooks determine the syllabus.

Asked whether they preferred, at beginner and elementary level, to focus on words and sentences rather than larger stretches of language, those who made a selection (79) were almost equally divided between agreement and disagreement.

Question 10 asked whether participants had a choice about the textbooks they used, with 35% indicating that they had no choice. *Question 11* asked those who had responded in the affirmative to the previous question which of two statements were true in their case and invited comments (see *Figure 5.8* and *Table 5.2* below). Thirty five per cent (35%) indicated that they had no choice about which textbooks to use.

Figure 5.8: Number and percentage indicating they have a choice about the textbooks they use

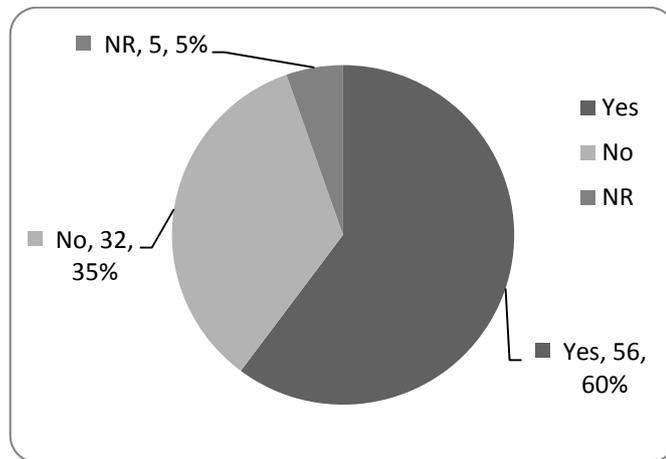


Table 5.2: Choosing textbooks

Statement	True		Not true		No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
My choice of textbooks relates mainly to whether I think my students will enjoy the activities they contain. The language content is less important.	13	14	43	46.2	37	39.8
My choice of textbooks relates mainly to whether they cover the language I want to cover in my class. I can adapt the activities.	51	54.8	8	8.6	34	36.6

Comments relating to *Question 11* are included in *Appendix 2*. There were ten (10) comments. Of these, five (5) referred to use of respondent's own materials with or without textbook supplementation; two (2) referred to the difficulty of determining how 'tasks' and 'activities' were being used by the researcher; one (1) referred to the need to cover content rather than focusing on games; one (1)

referred to the fact that language and tasks complement one another; and one (a) indicated the difficulty of teaching without a syllabus. Sample comments are included below:

I am very much focused on covering content. We typically don't play a lot of games in my classes. Sometimes but not always.

I generally create my own materials, so textbook choice is not an issue for me.

I taught on a course during the year with no syllabus, no marking criteria etc., and found it difficult to know what was expected of me, of the students, or even what the learning outcomes were.

Question 12 asked which of a range of possible content participants would include at particular levels (elementary etc.) in core language development courses. The responses are summarized in Tables 5.3 – 4.6 and Figures 5.9 – 5.15.

Table 5.3: Types of content included at beginner level

Content	Yes		No		Not ticked	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vocabulary	90	97	0	0	3	3
Language structures	73	78.5	17	18	3	3
Tasks	71	76	19	20	3	3
Activities	82	93.5	3	3	3	3
Learning strategies	47	50.5	43	46	3	3
Cohesive devices (e.g. because)	33	35.5	57	61	3	3
Types of link between clauses and sentences (e.g. comparison, contrast, example)	12	13	78	84	3	3

Table 5.4: Types of content included at elementary level

Content	Yes		No		Not ticked	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vocabulary	88	95	2	2	3	3
Language structures	88	95	2	2	3	3
Tasks	78	84	12	13	3	3
Activities	87	93.5	3	3	3	3
Learning strategies	69	74	21	24	3	3
Cohesive devices (e.g. because)	72	77	18	19	3	3
Types of link between clauses and sentences (e.g. comparison, contrast, example)	40	43	50	54	3	3

Table 5.5: Types of content included at intermediate level

Content	Yes		No		Not ticked	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vocabulary	84	90	4	2	2	2
Language structures	85	91	5	5	3	3
Tasks	87	93.5	3	3	3	3
Activities	87	93.5	3	3	3	3
Learning strategies	77	83	13	14	3	3
Cohesive devices (e.g. <i>because</i>)	83	89	7	7.5	3	3
Types of link between clauses and sentences (e.g. comparison, contrast, example)	86	92.5	4	4	3	3

Table 5.6: Types of content included at advanced level

Content	Yes		No		Not ticked	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Vocabulary	77	83	3	3	13	14
Language structures	75	81	15	16	3	3
Tasks	87	93.5	3	3	3	3
Activities	81	87	9	10	3	3
Learning strategies	75	81	15	16	3	3
Cohesive devices (e.g. <i>because</i>)	72	77	18	19	3	3
Types of link between clauses and sentences (e.g. comparison, contrast, example)	84	90	6	6.5	3	3

Figure 5.9: Percentage of respondents who would include vocabulary at different levels

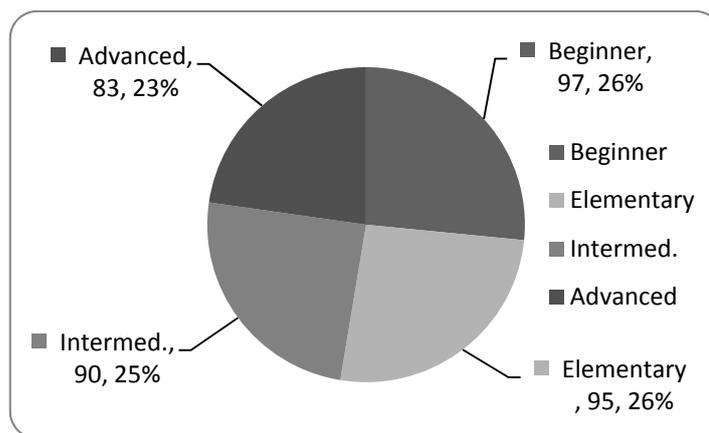


Figure 5.10: Percentage of respondents who would include language structures at different levels

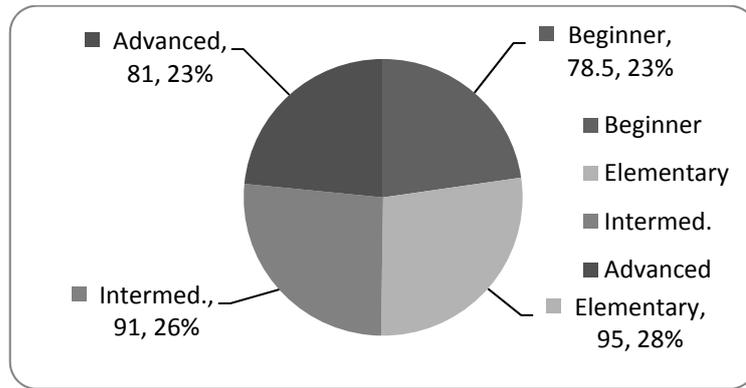


Figure 5.11: Percentage of respondents who would include tasks at different levels

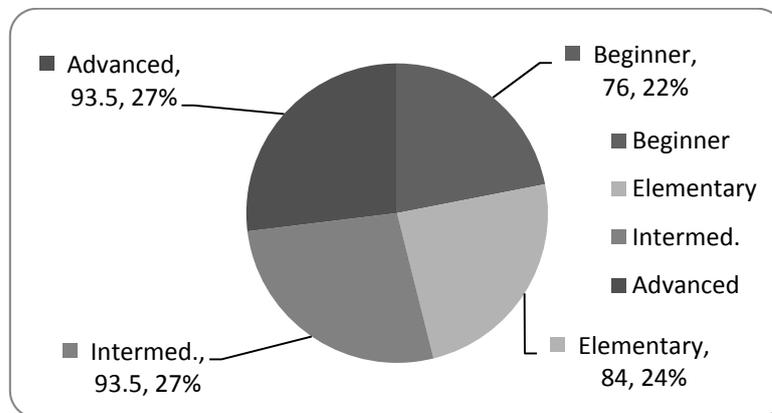


Figure 5.12: Percentage of respondents who would include activities at different levels

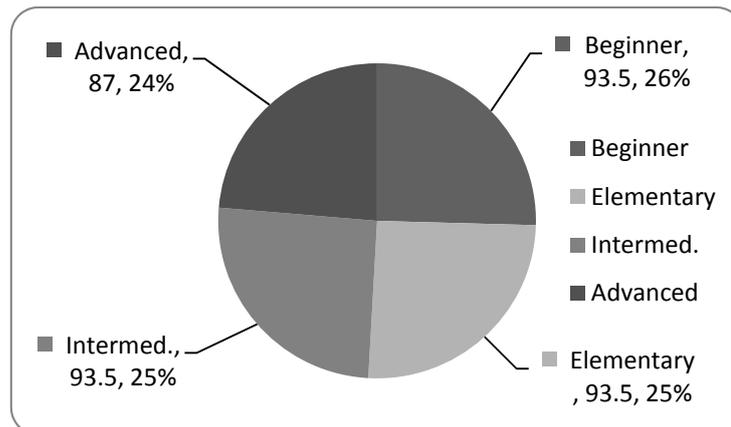


Figure 5.13: Percentage of respondents who would include learning strategies at different levels

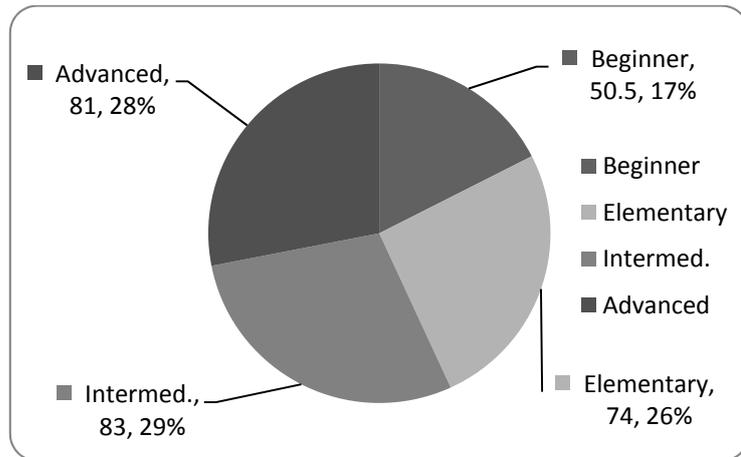


Figure 5.14: Percentage of respondents who would include cohesive devices at different levels

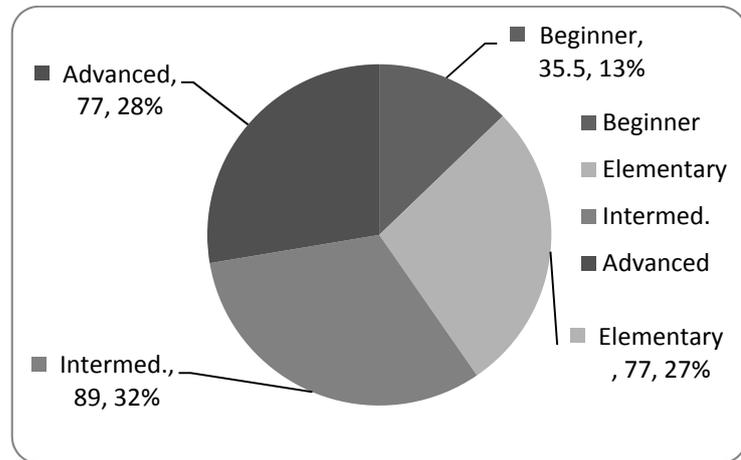
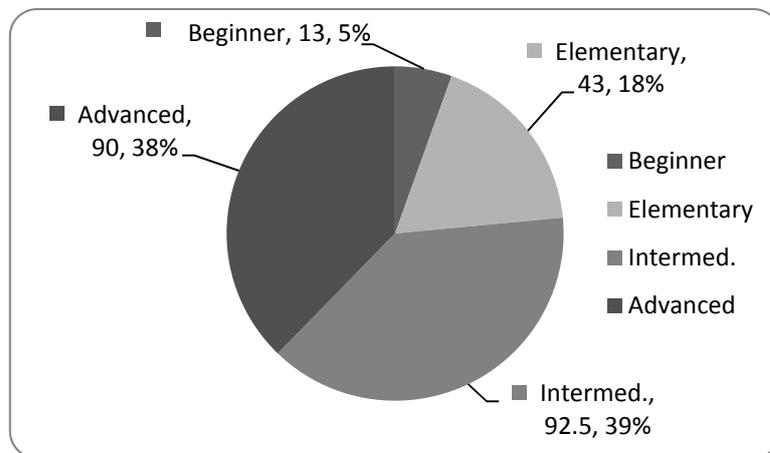


Figure 5.15: Percentage of respondents who would include types of linkage between clauses at different levels



In connection with cohesive devices and types of link between clauses, it is relevant to note that there is a clear distinction between the responses of participants from New Zealand and Australia and those from Japan, Taiwan and Syria. The percentage of positive responses in each case is provided in **Figures 5.16 – 5.19** below:

Figure 5.16: *Percentage of those from New Zealand and Australia who would include cohesive devices*

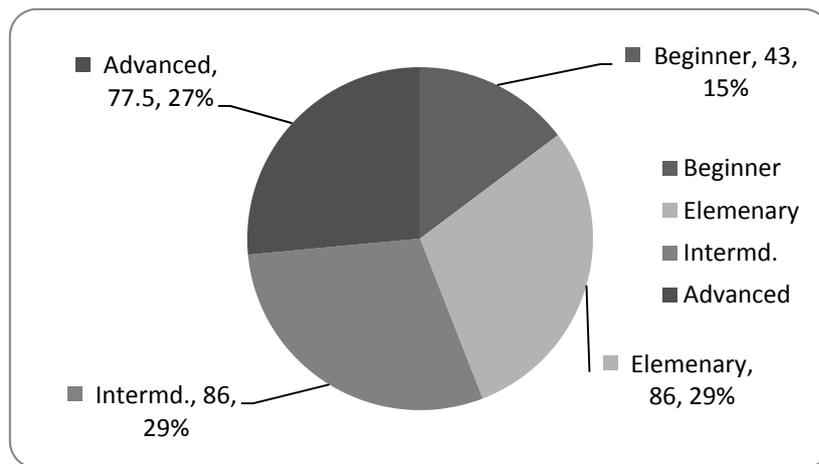


Figure 5.17: *Percentage of those from Japan, Taiwan and Syria who would include cohesive devices*

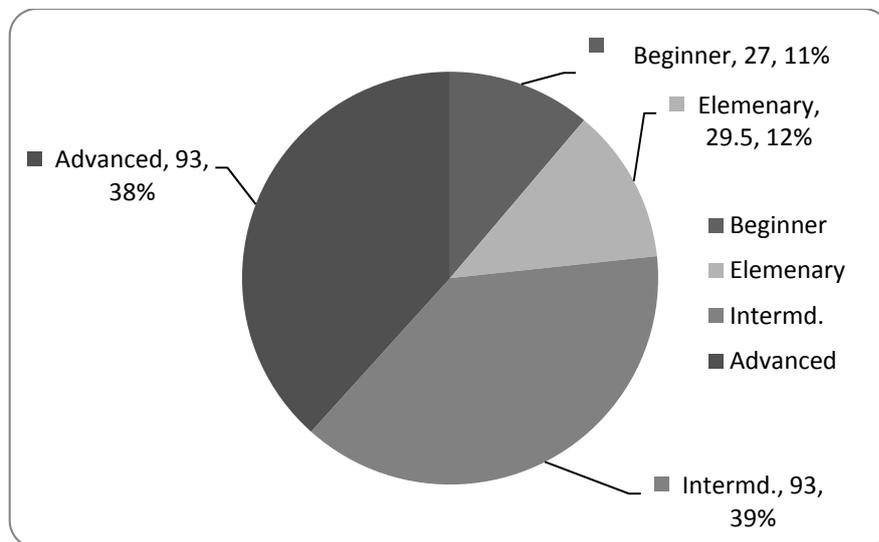


Figure 5.18: Percentage of those from New Zealand and Australia who would include types of link between clauses

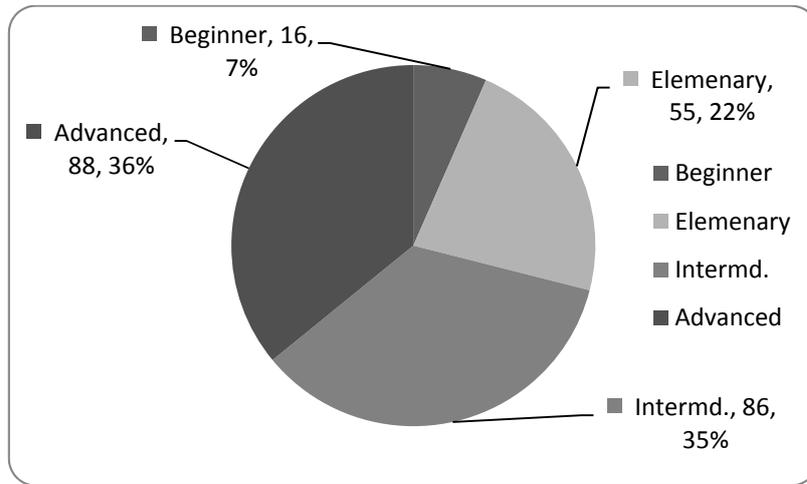
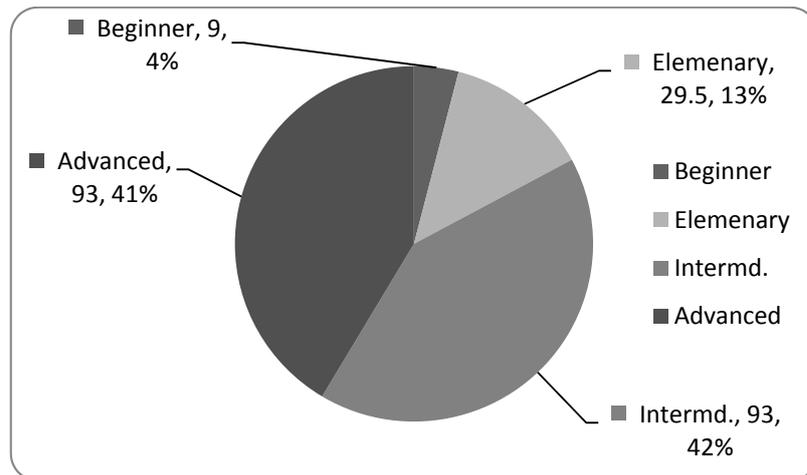


Figure 5.19: Percentage of those from Japan, Taiwan and Syria who would include types of link between clauses



Question 13 asked when, if at all, participants would introduce certain semantic relations (e.g. at elementary level). The responses are indicated in **Tables 5.7 – 5.10** below.

Table 5.7: Semantic relations introduced at beginner level

Content	Beginner					
	YES		NO		Not Ticked (NT)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comparing and contrasting (e.g. <i>He's ...and/but she's...</i>)	24	25	67	72	2	9
Concession (e.g. <i>Although....</i>)	0	0	91	97	2	2
Purpose (e.g., <i>She used a key to open the door.</i>)	8	9	83	89	2	2
Ellipsis (e.g. <i>A: Did he laugh? B: Yes.</i>)	3	3	88	95	2	2
Substitution (e.g. <i>He's... and so is she.</i>)	4	4	87	93.5	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because'	24	26	67	72	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because of'	2	2	89	96	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'so'	10	11	81	87	2	2
Results signalled by 'therefore'	1	1	90	97	2	2
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled (e.g. <i>He took an umbrella. It was wet.</i>)	18	19	73	78.5	2	2
A combination of reasons and conditions (e.g. <i>If he....he will... because...</i>)	0/	0	91	97	2	2
Choices (e.g. <i>apples or oranges</i>)	52	56	39	42	2	2
Temporal sequence (e.g. <i>He....(then)...</i>)	24	25	67	72	2	2

Table 5.8: Semantic relations introduced at elementary level

Content	Elementary					
	YES		NO		Not Ticked (NT)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comparing and contrasting (e.g. <i>He's ...and/but she's...</i>)	54	58	37	39	2	2
Concession (e.g. <i>Although....</i>)	20	21	71	76	2	2
Purpose (e.g., <i>She used a key to open the door.</i>)	42	45	49	52	2	2
Ellipsis (e.g. <i>A: Did he laugh? B: Yes.</i>)	22	24	69	74	2	2
Substitution (e.g. <i>He's... and so is she.</i>)	29	31	62	67	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because'	64	69	27	29	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because of'	27	29	64	69	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'so'	54	58	37	40	2	2
Results signalled by 'therefore'	19	20	72	77	2	2
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled (e.g. <i>He took an umbrella. It was wet.</i>)	20	21.5	71	76	2	2
A combination of reasons and conditions (e.g. <i>If he....he will... because...</i>)	4	4	87	93	2	2
Choices (e.g. <i>apples or oranges</i>)	50	54	41	44	2	2
Temporal sequence (e.g. <i>He....(then)...</i>)	54	58	37	39	2	2

Table 5.9: Semantic relations introduced at intermediate level

Content	Intermediate					
	YES		NO		Not Ticked (NT)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comparing and contrasting (e.g. <i>He's ...and/but she's...</i>)	30	32	61	65	2	2
Concession (e.g. <i>Although....</i>)	70	75	21	22	2	2
Purpose (e.g., <i>She used a key to open the door.</i>)	50	54	41	44	2	2
Ellipsis (e.g. <i>A: Did he laugh? B: Yes.</i>)	53	57	38	41	2	2
Substitution (e.g. <i>He's... and so is she.</i>)	53	57	38	41	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because'	26	28	65	70	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because of'	62	67	29	31	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'so'	39	42	52	56	2	2
Results signalled by 'therefore'	66	71	25	27	2	2
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled (e.g. <i>He took an umbrella. It was wet.</i>)	39	42	52	56	2	2
A combination of reasons and conditions (e.g. <i>If he....he will... because...</i>)	65	69	26	28	2	2
Choices (e.g. <i>apples or oranges</i>)	11	12	80	86	2	2
Temporal sequence (e.g. <i>He....(then)...</i>)	31	33	60	64.5	2	2

Table 5.10: Semantic relations introduced at advanced level

Content	Advanced					
	YES		NO		Not Ticked (NT)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comparing and contrasting (e.g. <i>He's ...and/but she's...</i>)	15	16	76	81	2	2
Concession (e.g. <i>Although....</i>)	25	26	66	71	2	2
Purpose (e.g., <i>She used a key to open the door.</i>)	15	16	76	82	2	2
Ellipsis (e.g. <i>A: Did he laugh? B: Yes.</i>)	29	31	62	67	2	2
Substitution (e.g. <i>He's... and so is she.</i>)	20	22	71	77	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because'	10	11	81	88	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'because of'	18	20	73	79	2	2
Reasons signalled by 'so'	11	12	80	86	2	2
Results signalled by 'therefore'	23	25	68	73	2	2
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled (e.g. <i>He took an umbrella. It was wet.</i>)	26	28	65	70	2	2
A combination of reasons and conditions (e.g. <i>If he....he will... because...</i>)	35	37	56	60	2	2
Choices (e.g. <i>apples or oranges</i>)	8	9	83	90	2	2
Temporal sequence (e.g. <i>He....(then)...</i>)	10	11	81	88	2	2

In none of the areas signalled in the *Tables* immediately above were any major differences between respondents from Japan, Taiwan and Syria on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other detected. In terms of *overall* percentages, however, there were some major differences (see *Table 5.11* below).

Table 5.11: Percentage of participants who indicated that they would include semantic relations at particular levels

Content	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Comparing and contrasting (e.g. <i>He's ...and/but she's...</i>)	25	58	32	16
Concession (e.g. <i>Although....</i>)	0	21	75	26
Purpose (e.g. <i>She used a key to open the door.</i>)	9	45	54	16
Ellipsis (e.g. <i>A: Did he laugh? B: Yes.</i>)	3	24	57	31
Substitution (e.g. <i>He's... and so is she.</i>)	4	31	57	22
Reasons signalled by 'because'	26	69	28	11
Reasons signalled by 'because of'	2	29	67	20
Reasons signalled by 'so'	11	58	42	12
Results signalled by 'therefore'	1	20	71	25
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled (e.g. <i>He took an umbrella. It was wet.</i>)	19	21.5	42	28
A combination of reasons and conditions (e.g. <i>If he....he will... because...</i>)	0	4	69	37
Choices (e.g. <i>apples or oranges</i>)	56	54	12	9
Temporal sequence (e.g. <i>He....(then)...</i>)	25	58	33	11

Cross tabulation of Question 2 (number of years of teaching) and **(a)** two aspects of *Question 12* (whether cohesive devices/ types of link between clauses and sentences would be included in a core language development course at different levels), and **(b)** *Question 13* (at which levels participants would introduce various aspects of coherence and cohesion into their teaching) did not reveal any major, systematic differences between length of teaching experience and inclusion/exclusion of cohesive devices/ links between clauses and levels at which participants would introduce various aspects of coherence and cohesion (see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*).

Question 14 asked which of a range of genres participants would introduce at different levels. The responses are indicated in *Tables 5.12* and *5.13* below.

Table 5.12: Whether genres would be introduced at beginner and elementary levels

Content	Beginner						Elementary					
	YES		NO		NT		YES		NO		NT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Recount	48	52	38	41	7	7.5	59	64	25	27	9	10
Narrative	38	41	47	50.5	8	9	60	64.5	25	27	8	9
Instruction	38	41	47	50.5	8	9	56	60	29	31	8	9
Argument	1	1	84	99	8	9	12	13	73	78.5	8	9
Report	6	6.5	79	85	8	9	18	20	67	72	8	9
Explanation	4	4	81	87	8	9	33	35.5	52	56	8	9
Description	42	45	43	46	8	9	63	68	22	24	8	9

Table 5.13: *Whether genres would be introduced at intermediate and advanced levels*

Content	Intermediate						Advanced					
	YES		NO		NT		YES		NO		NT	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Recount	44 29	48	42	45	7	7.5	43	46	43	46	7	7.5
Narrative	59	63	26	28	8	9	40	43	45	48	8	9
Instruction	53 /31	57	32	34	8	9	39	42	46	50	8	9
Argument	54/ 31	58	31	33	8	8.6	66	71	19	20	8	9
Report	58	62	27	29	8	9	68	73	17	18	8	9
Explanation	69	74	16	17	8	9	57	61	28	30	8	9
Description	58	62	27	29	8	9	45	48	40	43	8	9

In none of the areas signalled in the *Tables* above were any major differences between respondents from Japan, Taiwan and Syria on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other detected. In terms of overall percentages, however, there was, once again, some major differences (see *Table 5.14* below).

Table 5.14: *Percentage who would include particular genres at particular levels or who did not respond*

Content	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Recount	52	64	48	46
Narrative	41	64.5	63	43
Instruction	41	50	57	42
Argument	1	13	58	71
Report	6.5	20	62	73
Explanation	4	35.5	74	61
Description	45	68	62	48

A number of comments (17) were added in connection with genre selection (see *Appendix 2, Table 7: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). Of these, six (6) referred to the necessity of including all genres at all levels; three (3) associated specific genres with particular levels; three (3) referred to the levels at which respondents were teaching; three (3) indicated uncertainty about the

researcher's use of terminology; and one (1) indicated that the degree of expertise or skill required was more important than the genre. Sample comments are included below:

Even though most levels to do the same things, the depth of the understanding and ability is different.

Most can be taught at all levels – but some are easier to teach at higher levels. All can be more/less sophisticated depending on language used.

I'm really not sure. I've only taught from intermediate onwards.

In this and previous question all depends on how one defines these terms e.g, 'purpose' 'narrative' report etc. for example does report mean all kinds of reporting in English, including journalism. Or just some 'reported speech'.

Questions 15 – 20 related to skills-based courses and their integration. *Question 15* asked whether participants were responsible for a reading course at their institution. Fifty-four (54/ 58%) claimed that they were. *Question 17* asked whether participants were responsible for a writing course at their institution. Fifty-six (56/60.2%) claimed that they were.

Participants were then asked whether, if they were responsible for a reading course, they would be aware in a detailed way of the content of any writing course that the same students were taking in the same year (*Question 16*) and whether, if they were responsible for a writing course, they would be aware in a detailed way of the content of any reading course that the same students were taking in the same year (*Question 18*). The responses are summarized in *Table 5.15* below.

Table 5.15: Participants' awareness of the content of parallel skills courses

Question	Yes		No		In part		No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
If you are responsible for a reading course at your institution, would you be aware in a detailed way of the content of any writing course that the same students were taking in the same year?	41	44	13	14	13	14	26	28
If you are responsible for a writing course at your institution, would you be aware in a detailed way of the content of any reading course that the same students were taking in the same year?	39	42	11	12	17	18	26	28

For additional comments relating to *Questions 15-18* see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*. Of the twenty five (25) comments provided, fifteen (15) indicated that reading and writing were combined in the institution in which the respondent taught; two (2) indicated that both courses were taught by the same teacher; two (2) indicated that teachers worked together to ensure integration; one (1) indicated that all four skills were integrated; two (2) indicated that they did not teach reading or writing – or not at the same level; one (1) indicated that these courses had been completely unrelated when they taught them. Sample comments are included below:

They don't have a writing course in the 3rd year.

I teach lower levels reading classes. But upper level writing classes. Input at early years. Output in later years.

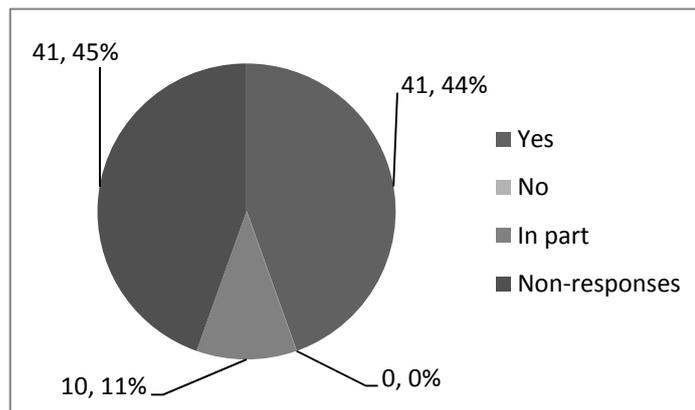
In the past, when I did teach writing (& reading) they were completely unrelated.

In our department, the teacher teaching the same subject work together to decide the course aims and the textbook. A teacher is responsible for a particular subject when she works as the coordinator or is the only person teaching that subject.

This information is not available or shared.

Question 19 asked participants who had responded in the affirmative to *Questions 16* and/ or *18* whether they would try to make sure that two courses (reading and writing) which involved the same students at the same stage in their programme were related to one another. The responses are summarized in *Figure 5.20* below.

Figure 5.20: Respondents' views on ways of integrating reading and writing courses



For comments relating to *Questions 18* and *19*, see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*. Of the seven (7) comments provided, six (6) indicated either that reading and writing were clearly related (x4) or that reading texts provide models for writing (x2), and one (x1) observed that the link between the two skills was weak in their institution. Sample comments are included below:

Reading texts can provide models for writing (not always). Reading texts can provide content material for writing tasks. Reading and writing are inextricably linked.

Reading and writing are obviously related.

Unfortunately, the college students in Taiwan spend less time on reading than the students 10 years ago. Therefore these two highly related skills have largely weakened.

Question 20 asked participants who had answered ‘yes’ to *Question 16* and/ or *18*, how they would set about trying to make sure that the two courses (reading and writing) related to one another. Altogether forty-nine (49) comments were received. These were grouped into five categories (see *Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). Thirty-six (36) of the responses indicated that the courses would be linked either by using reading to provide models for writing or by genre and/or by topic or specific aspects of language; three (3) indicated that the courses would be linked through the use of reading texts as research for writing tasks; three (3) indicated that the courses would be linked through appropriate textbook selection; three (3) indicated that courses would be integrated in one class or through parallel teaching; two (2) indicated that courses would be linked through teacher liaison; and one (1) indicated that integration was difficult in the case of younger learners whose reading level exceeds their writing level. Sample comments are included below (as mentioned earlier in the chapter, here and elsewhere in this chapter, comments by participants working in New Zealand and Australia are in italic print):

Use reading for writing (e.g. Models/ ideas for writing).

They also read and analyse the same genre that they write in.

Read for information to use in an essay.

By using similar topics and contexts.

I teach in topics and make reading/ writing/ vocabulary acquisition dovetailed.

Linking topic areas to enable reading input to be exploited in writing tasks.

Reading provides the content, vocabulary, structures for writing.

Similar topics and vocabulary. So that they link together.

Use the textbook that contains four skills altogether.

Using the same textbook that has both reading and writing components.

Write responses to the reading. Write about the characters etc.

Question 21 asked participants to indicate, from a list of nine possibilities, which types of in-service course would be useful for them. The responses are summarized in *Table 5.16* below.

Table 5.16: *Aspects of in-service development participants would find useful*

Type of in-service development	Useful		Not ticked	
	No.	%	No.	%
Testing and evaluation	63	68	30	32
Materials design	48	52	45	48
Technology (computers, multimedia, etc.)	47	50.5	46	49.5
Syllabus design	47	50	46	49.5
Grammar teaching	46	49.5	47	50.5
Skills-related teaching	43	46	50	54
Communicative teaching	34	37	59	63
Class management	30	32	63	68
Other/s (please specify below)	4	4	88	96

There were only four comments listed alongside ‘Other’ relating to *Question 21*. These are included below (with, once again, those provided by teachers located in Australia or New Zealand in italics).

Higher level pronunciation, networking with other ESL teachers

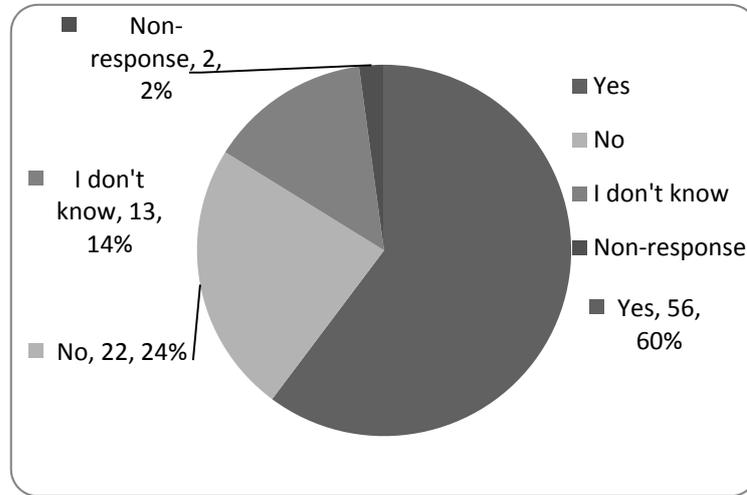
Students with different abilities in the same class.

Creating games /task sheets

Any seminars or meetings I will try to attend.

Question 22 asked participants whether the institution where they worked had an overall curriculum for the English courses it offered (showing, for example, the relationship between each of the courses in terms of level and specific content, and including reference to methodology and materials). The responses are indicated in *Figure 5.21* below.

Figure 5.21: Does the institution where you work have an overall curriculum for the English courses it offers?



There were twenty-one (21) comments relating to *Question 22* (see *Appendix 2, Table 11: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). Of these, fourteen (14) indicated that the curriculum documents made available by the institutions where respondents worked were either inadequate, incomplete or unhelpful; three (3) indicated that they had not seen any such documents; two (2) indicated that syllabus design was under way; one (1) indicated that teachers did their ‘own thing’ and one (1) observed that they had ‘seen it all’. Sample comments are included below:

It did before (but not reference to methodology and materials) but recent changes have been made on an individual course basis without looking at the whole.

Not in huge detail.

We have a general overall curriculum in which specific course description and its objectives are stated. However, it doesn’t contain such details as specific content or methodology.

We do have an overall curriculum but it's vague and does not specify methodology and does not provide specific examples of the vocabulary, related grammar that each level should aim at.

Yes it does, but I personally feel curriculum objectives and the goals – specific- could be much better stated.

Different textbooks levels are geared towards different courses/ students' levels, but there is not an overall structured curriculum. Textbooks and/or materials are chosen based on the level of the students.

1st year classes do to a limited degree. 2nd through 4th do not.

Yes, to an extent – the curriculum has evolved at different times and rates in different skills areas. Skills are not fully integrated.

Yes- Although vague in some aspects (e.g. relationship between levels & specific language content) there is extensive methodology & materials explanation.

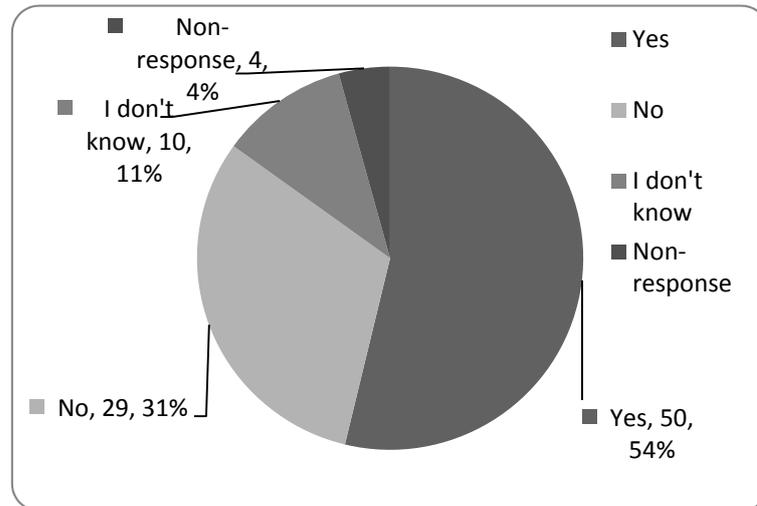
I have said “yes” because we are told that it does, but I have not seen it.

If so, it is not shared or explained.

Each teacher does his/her own thing. . . .

Question 23 asked the participants whether they thought that all of the English courses that a student takes in any particular year should be directly related to one another (see *Figure 5.22* below).

Figure 5.22: *Should all of the courses taken by a student in a particular year be directly related to one another?*



As shown in *Figure 5.22*, only just over half of the participants (54%) indicated that they believed that all of the courses taken by a student in a particular year should be related to one another. There were seventeen (17) comments provided in connection with this question (see *Appendix 2, Table 12: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be summarized as follows:

- reference to the necessity of taking account of student needs and expectations (x5);
- reference to participant's belief that course integration would be impossible in particular circumstances (x4);
- indication of a positive response to course integration (x3);
- reference to participant's belief that course integration was not always necessary or desirable (x3)
- reference to participant's believing that the question was unclear (x2).

Sample comments are included below:

Depends on students, expectations, ability etc.

Students should be able to choose a course that suits their needs. Pre-course interviews are important.

Courses should build on one another so students can make progress. Exception- students who fail should ideally be able to repeat a level using new material.

Courses should be taken based on their relevance to students' needs, not each other.

Not necessarily – how they are related just as much depends on the individual student's perspective and goals.

Courses should be complementary.

Yes- I am not sure about 'clearly' but they should be related.

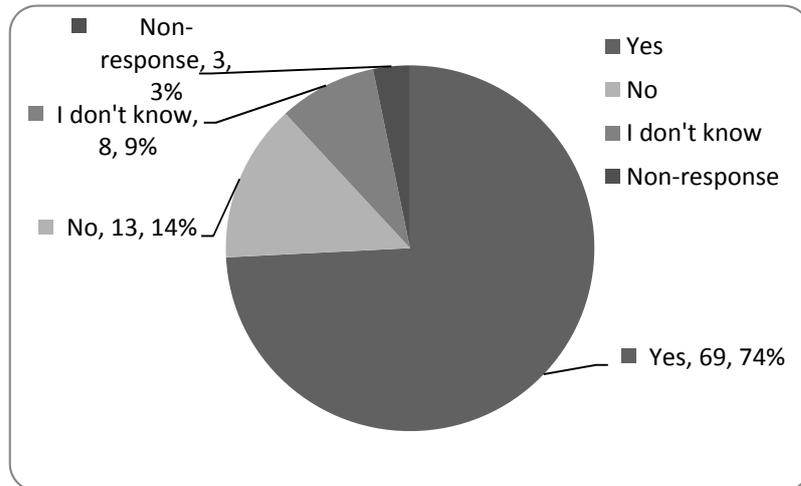
Yes- as much as is feasible, integration is positive.

In the lower levels, but not in the intermediate or above levels.

I think that this would take a lot of coordination among teachers. In a very large Department - almost impossible. Materials would have to be developed not using commercial books, impractical here.

Question 24 asked participants whether they believed it was important to have an explicit syllabus document for each course (see *Figure 5.23* below).

Figure 5.23: Whether participants believed it is important to have an explicit syllabus document for each course



It is interesting to note that although almost 70% of participants replied in the affirmative, thirteen (13/14) responded in the negative. Of the eight (8) respondents who indicated that they did not know, seven (7) were teaching in Japan, Taiwan or Syria.

Twenty-four (24) comments were provided in connection with *Question 24* (see *Appendix 2, Table 13: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be summarized as follows:

- reference to the need for consistency and clarity, with some also referring to the need for adaptability(x13);
- reference to respondent's opinion that explicit syllabus documents are restrictive or not strictly necessary (x6);
- reference to the desirability of making students more aware of course objectives (x2);
- reference to the view that course aims became clear as the course proceeded (x1);
- general reference to learner needs (x1);
- general reference to teachers' plans (x1).

Sample comments are included below:

Meet learner need.

So there is consistency in what various teachers in the same course are teaching.

Explicit is good – know where you stand. Does not need to control how it is to be taught or the materials to be used but inexperienced or busy teachers often find this helpful.

Especially for teachers new to the programme who might not be aware of how the course runs, what is usually covered etc.

It serves as a guideline for teachers and students - to set and assess teaching and learning goals.

Guidelines/an outline would be enough but it would be more helpful to have explicit syllabus.

Direction is good but need freedom to develop as you go with particular groups of students.

It keeps the teachers accountable.

It is important to have a syllabus for the teacher. To have a basis and structure for the course.

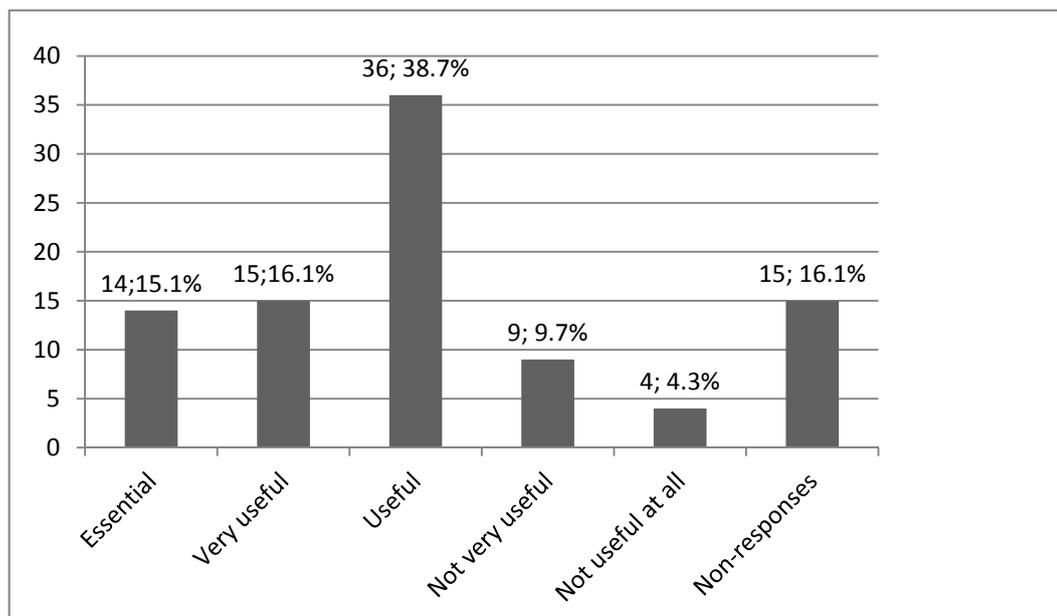
Yes – for the sake of new teachers who would otherwise lack confidence & may end up re-inventing the wheel. At the same time there should be room for continuing evolution. Explicitly flexible.

Who wants to combine all the courses in one level together? That's a big job. We need a team, a supervisor and less teaching hours.

It is helpful if done well, but not strictly necessary.

Question 25 asked participants to indicate, using a five-point scale (from *essential* to *not useful at all*), the extent of usefulness of syllabus documents designed by their institution for the level at which they taught (if their institution made syllabus documents available). The responses are summarized in *Figure 5.24* below.

Figure 5.24: *Perceived usefulness of syllabus documents made available by institutions where participants worked*



Twenty-four (24) comments were provided in connection with Question 25 (see *Appendix 2, Table 14: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be summarized as follows:

- indication that the syllabus documents that were available were unclear (x10);
- expression of the view that the relevant documents were, or should be flexible (x3);

- *indication that the usefulness of the syllabus depended on the programme being taught or the skill of the syllabus designer (x3);*
- *indication that syllabus documents provide for accountability (x2);*
- *indication that respondent had not seen the relevant document (x1);*
- *indication that students do not refer to the syllabus (x1);*
- *indication of the belief that the syllabus is related to student outcomes, not student proficiency (x1);*
- *indication of the belief that the syllabus complements the textbook (x1).*

Sample comments are included below:

I haven't seen them.

They seem a bit vague/ superficial – the kind of documents anyone could create by simply copying out the list of contents/skills at the front of most textbooks!

They are useful as guides, but comments on methodology and/or materials have limited usefulness. - It is very important to know what to teach and sometimes when, but I am happy to work out how to deliver it myself.

The syllabus is basically the book and a Writing syllabus which is just the writing topics. However, they are closely related to the content in the book.

In some ways not really a syllabus only objectives.

Our document includes (mostly task-based) objectives and assessments for each course. These are not broken down, however, into 'units of work'. Teachers have to do that –or use previous teachers.

I think the objectives give (sometimes) the course a clear purpose but sometimes the focus on tasks and vocab. obscures elements of language e.g., what type of grammar is covered.

Again, because of recent changes to syllabus documents and now less specific (and therefore I believe less useful) than before.

Not very useful – very bare curriculum style (whys) as opposed to lists (whats).

Sometimes the syllabus needs minor adaptation to meet students' needs e.g. Middle Eastern students.

For the sake of the students and to ensure some overall continuity given faculty turnover, I believe a set of basic documents is important, but they are not written in stone.

They don't tell me anything in terms of students achieved outcomes in their proficiency performance.

It provides accountability and a guide for students about what is to be covered. It also keeps the teacher on task.

If you don't know where the goal is, how can you know if your students reach it or not?

I am designing my own as I teach this year as the previous one seemed entirely focused on discrete grammar points from a text book.

Depends on which programme you are teaching on.

It depends who makes the syllabus! – should be a very experienced teacher/ director of studies.

It complements the book and provides extra practice of various skills.

Question 26 asked participants what they would do if they were not provided with a syllabus document for a course that they had been asked to teach. There were five response options (including ‘other’), from which they could select any number. Responses are as indicated in *Table 5.17* below. In this case, the overall responses are indicated in the top line of each cell, with response number from participants in Australia or New Zealand being indicated on the second line *in bold italic print*.

Table 5.17: *What participants would do if not provided with a syllabus document for a course*

Choices	Ticked		Not ticked		Non-response
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Prepare one yourself for your own use	28 22	30 78.5	63/ 25	68 40	2 2
Prepare one yourself for your own use and give a copy to students	36 10	38.7 28	55/ 37	59 67	2 2
Allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeds	21 14	23 67	70 33	75 47	2 2
Focus on material and methodology rather than syllabus	13 9	14 69	78 38	84 49	2 2
Other	0	0	0	0	

Thirteen (13) respondents provided comments relating to *Question 26* (see *Appendix 2 Table 15: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be summarised as follows:

- comments on details relating to the provision of respondent's own syllabuses (x5);
- reference to the fact that the respondent did not prepare syllabuses (x4);
- indication that what respondent would do would depend on the nature of the course (x2);

- indication that respondent would provide students with a general course outline (x1);
- indication that respondent would follow a textbook (x1).

Some sample comments are provided below:

The first time around I usually struggle to develop it as I go because there is little warning but the second time I would have it ready to explain to the students up front instead of as I go.

I cannot function well as a teacher without some form of syllabus document... even if I edit it according to need as the course proceeds.

This depends on time. At a minimum I prepare a week or two's unit of work and have some idea of what will follow.

When teaching "General English" (no set syllabus) I began with D(Focus on material and methodology rather than syllabus) and C (Allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeds) but later realised the need for A (Prepare one yourself for own use.)

What do you mean "syllabus document"? (I don't think we have one)
Sometimes I will prepare some extra teaching materials by myself.

Depends on the facility because some private places are totally businesses operated by non-educators and non-teachers.

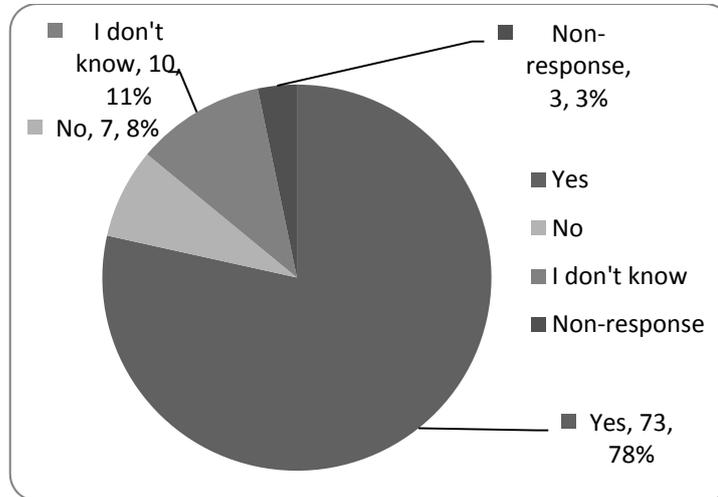
Follow the textbook.

Some course have detailed syllabuses, some (especially part-time) don't.

Question 27 asked participants whether they could provide a list of the expected **specific outcomes** of each of their English courses (that is, a list of what students

can do in English as a result of the course). Responses are summarized in *Figure 5.25*

Figure 5.25: *Could you provide a list of specific outcomes for each of your courses if asked to do so?*



Question 28 asked those who had responded in the affirmative to the previous question to provide one specific outcome relating to one course, specifying the year and type of the course. Although 73 (78%) respondents said that they would be able to provide a list of expected outcomes, only 62 (67%) attempted to do so. The responses are summarized in *Appendix 2, Table 16: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). Interestingly, one of the participants made the following note: *Sorry – too tired*.

Of the sixty two (62) responses, fifteen (15) specified course outcomes in terms of measurable ‘can do’ statements (e.g. *Students will be able to ask for directions; Students can use the present simple to talk about daily routines*). However, among these fifteen were several which were problematic in one or more respects. In the first example below, no reference is made to the meaning/s of the present simple tense in particular contexts of use; in the second example below, reference is made to a general area of vocabulary (food) but there is no indication of whether, for example, money/ weight etc. were to be considered:

Master simple past tense forms (Reading & Writing elementary level).

Hold a basic conversation in English relating to shopping for food (Year 1- general English).

The remaining forty seven (47) examples either lack language indicators and/or are too general to be measurable (see examples below):

Understanding a written text with increased understanding & critical awareness (Upper intermediate – reading & writing).

Students are able to communicate adequately on general topics (Yr 2 – general communicative English).

Question 29 asked participants how they decided what to teach in each of their courses. They had six options to choose from, and they could choose more than one. An overview of responses is included in *Table 5.18* below.

Table 5.18: *How respondents decided what to include in each of their courses*

Options	Number	Percentage
The institute where I work has a printed syllabus for each course	50	54
I just decide what I think would be best to include	35	38
I meet with other teachers each year and we decide what to include	32	34
I ask the teacher who taught the course in the previous year	26	28
I select a textbook or part of a textbook that I think would be appropriate	24	26
Other (please specify)	11	12

Although there was little difference in terms of percentage response rate in most cases between teachers located in Australia and New Zealand and those located in Japan, Taiwan or Syria, there *was* a noticeable difference in relation to those who indicated that they selected a textbook or part of a textbook that they thought would be appropriate, with sixteen (16) of the selections in this area coming from teachers located in Australia or New Zealand (33% of the Australia/ New Zealand cohort) and eight (8) coming from teachers located in Japan, Taiwan or Syria (18% of the Japan/ Taiwan/Syria cohort).

Twenty six (26) respondents provided comments relating to *Question 29* (see *Appendix 2 Table 17: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be summarized as follows:

- reference to the relationship between student needs and syllabus choices (x10);
- indication that decisions were taken by the institution as a whole or by a group (x7);
- indication that the respondent has designed a syllabus at some point (x3);
- reference to the fact that there is a national syllabus (x1);
- reference to the fact that the respondent followed a textbook (x1);
- reference to respondent's belief that it is not possible to decide what to teach before meeting the students (x1);
- reference to the fact that circumstances may differ (x1);
- an indication of the length of the courses taught by the respondent (x1).

Sample comments are included below:

Needs analysis of students.

Students' goals/targets.

Please note that I use the printed syllabus and then add extras or delete according to student needs. Extras can be frequent, deletions are infrequent.

The institution decides.

Follow the specified textbook.

I design my course and (I hope) others follow me! We do courses together – the course is assessment driven.

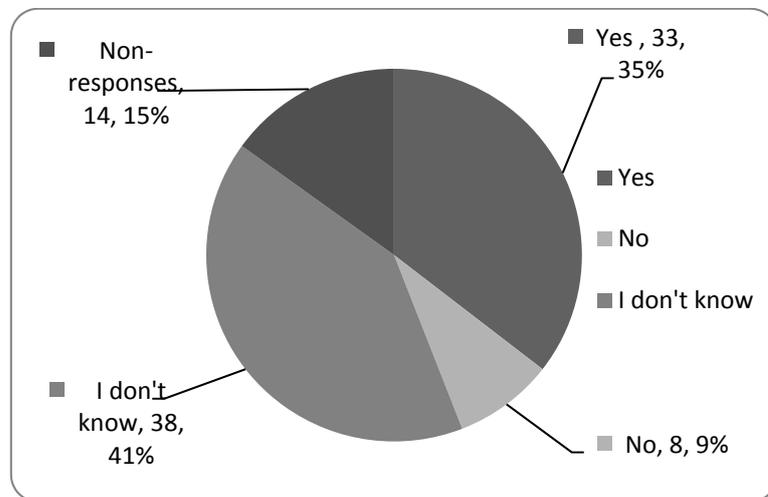
I find out the aims of the course and design the syllabus myself. If I'm the only person teaching this new course.

Use the curriculum laid out by their textbook.

We have a national curriculum to follow and then supplement it.

Question 30 asked participants whether, if they used a textbook from a particular series with a group of first year students, they would select the next highest level textbook from the same series for the same students when they were in their second year. The responses are indicated in **Figure 5.26** below.

Figure 5.26: *If you used a textbook from a particular series with a group of first year students, would you select the next highest level textbook from the same series for the same students when they are in their second year?*



Twenty six (26) respondents provided comments relating to Question 30 (see *Appendix 2, Table 18: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These are summarised below:

- indication of uncertainty as to how respondent would proceed (x8);
- indication that student need would impact on respondent's decision (x5);
- indication that a book in the same series would be selected only if it was considered appropriate (x5);
- indication that a wide range of texts would generally be used for a course (x4);
- indication that the respondent did not like textbooks or did not teach in 'this way' (x2);

- indication that the respondent would not be given a choice in the textbook selection (x1);
- indication that a single textbook would not necessarily be appropriate in relation to all skill areas (x1).

Sample comments are included below:

I would re-assess the needs of students. Sometimes a change is refreshing for students and teachers.

It depends totally on their English growth as the next level is a series might be too easy and therefore not suited for the students.

Don't use one textbook for a course.

As a general rule but would supplement with other material with different focus.

They need a mix of texts.

I have no choice in the texts.

Possible because a series should develop vocabulary, grammar, topics in some logical way. Not necessarily.

Textbooks have a hidden syllabus, which may not match your own.

This sometimes happens, not always. I think it could be a good idea as the writer may have "levels" for their books (do) and if you don't use the next level in the series you'll have to guess.

Question 31 asked participants who had answered *NO* or *I DON'T KNOW* to *Question 30* to provide a reason or reasons. There were forty-four (34) responses (see *Appendix 2 Table 19: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). These can be summarized as follows:

- reference to the importance of student feedback and/or student needs (x13);

- indication that the respondents indicated that they used a variety of resources which may or may not include textbooks (x7);
- reference to the fact that a different series might prove more appropriate or that respondent might prefer it (x6);
- reference to the possible impact of a change of programme type (x2);
- indication that respondent preferred to change series for the sake of variety (x2).

Sample comments are included below:

If it proves to be ineffective for that class.

If students found it dull/ difficult I'd change the following year.

Sometimes students complain about the book. They want to change the book, not the teachers.

We might have to even when students are not ready hence 'follow syllabus'.

According to students' feedback.

Possibly another text would address needs more flexibly.

The class may not necessarily be ready to move to that specific book – another book may be more suitable in terms of context – also, needs of students may change.

It depends on how well that textbook worked with the group, whether they needed continuity or needed a change, whether progression matched theirs, how good the next level was & many more.

I would never stick to one series as I believe in child-centred learning.

There is a “sameness” to some series which might get a bit tiresome.

I don't use textbooks much, but it would depend on the needs of the students & the outcomes for the course. Most textbooks don't cover reading /writing etc. in a deep enough way or the way I want them to be taught.

We rarely use a textbook right through – we jump about choosing appropriate language from a variety of sources.

Parts of a text might be appropriate. However, additional texts may prove to be more helpful for particular skills.

Question 32 asked participants to list three aspects of discourse they considered important. There were twenty eight (28) responses and eighty five (85) entries, some of which have been divided into sections for the purpose of categorization (see *Appendix 2, Table 20: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*). The responses are summarized as follows:

- reference to macro-level textual organization (x39);
- references to meso-level textual organization, including seventeen (17) to cohesion (e.g. *cohesive devices; linking words*), and ten (10) to coherence (e.g. *semantic relations; means and result; moves and turns*) (x27);
- general references (e.g. *understanding the structure of an essay; paragraph structure; writing genres; variety of genres – text as a whole*) (x18);
- among references to micro-level textual organisation were ten (10) to grammar and lexis (e.g. *direct speech, reported speech, relative clauses: interrogatives, comparative*) and two (2) to micro-functions (*interrogation; questioning and answering*) (x12);
- references to skills, including four (4) to listening, speaking, reading and/or writing, and one (1) to inferencing (x10);

- references to informal/formal and/or spoken/written distinctions (e.g. *formal/ informal writing*) (x6);
- references to skills, including four to listening, speaking, reading and writing and one to inferencing (x5);
- references to context (x3);
- references to specific social genres/ text-types (*dialogue; reports; email; opinion letters; postcards*) (x3);
- references to cognitive genres/ discourse modes (*narrative; description*) (x2);
- seven (7) references proved difficult to classify (*shift in person from 'we' to 'you', which all refer to the general public; interaction; test; depends on the course; according to level of class; pronunciation & fluency; all are important*) and 3 indicating that the question had not been understood (e.g. *please clarify indicated above the phrase 'aspects of discourse'*).

Question 33, the final question, invited participants to add any comments they chose. All of these comments are listed below, those provided by teachers located in Australia or New Zealand being in italics.

Comment relating to lack of detailed job specification

Even working in public school, my role has never been clearly or explicitly described or explained.

Comment relating to the role of the teacher

A constant question I have is how I can evaluate my role in the learners' overall progress – i.e. what difference my intervention makes. It seems very difficult to measure.

Comments relating to discourse analysis

Sorry, I can't provide much useful sources of info here course I know little about discourse. I still need to work on it.

My knowledge of DA is insufficient to give a full answer to #32 [Which aspects of discourse do you think are important to include in your course?].

Comment relating to achievement objectives

Despite saying 'no' to specific outcomes (q.27), I'd willingly specify e.g., 'an improvement in using verb forms, added confidence in speaking, better paragraphing etc.

Comment relating to curriculum

I am going to send Q.22 [Does the institution where you work have an overall curriculum?] to the head of my school to see his response!

Comments relating to syllabus

A syllabus is important. However, in each class there are different students with different needs. Also, every teacher has a different teaching style. A flexible syllabus is best. A few main tasks should be a requirement, but the teacher should be able to choose what they want to teach as well.

Comment relating to methodology

Teaching language is such a dynamic fluid job that it is hard to answer some questions. For some classes I teach one way but for another I wouldn't attempt the same methodology.

Comment relating to skills

The cultural elements – I have to ask my students to stop translating words or phrases from Chinese, writing ability. Their writing in Chinese is much better than in English. I have to reduce their thinking or ideas to a 'basic' or 'simple' level so that they have the right vocabulary to express. - Taiwanese students are not very good at logical development (at least in my class). I have to spend a lot of time pointing out their fallacies. Sometimes I feel as if I were teaching them Chinese writing.

Comments relating to materials/ resources

Sometimes I use outside sources that have topics related to the topics in the textbook.

I found this tough as my situation is quite different. I develop a lot of my own materials to cater for the different needs in my class.

5.5 Summary of findings and discussion

This section provides a summary of findings and discussion around five main aspects of this study namely: *beliefs concerning the impact on learners of changing approaches to syllabus design and methodology; curriculum, syllabus and lesson planning; textbook use; the impact of discourse analysis on course content; and in-service development preferences*. The core summary points for these aspects are italicized at the end of each discussion section.

5.5.1 The cohort

The cohort was made up of 93 teachers of English as a second/ additional language from Australia (12), New Zealand (37), Japan (18), Taiwan (22) and Syria (4). Their experience of teaching EAL ranged from between one (1) and five (5) years (27%) to over 20 years (9%), with the majority having taught English as a second/ additional language between 6 and 19 years.

5.5.2 Beliefs concerning the impact on learners of changing approaches to syllabus design and methodology

A majority of the participants indicated that they had current experience of teaching a core language development course (75/81%) or a skills-specific course (79/80%), with 87.5% of the total cohort indicating that they were currently more confident about what they should teach in a core language development course, and 86% in a writing course than they were when they began teaching. There was less agreement about whether changes in approaches to English language teaching over the past twenty years had led to increased learner proficiency and/or confidence. Only just over half (48/51%) indicated that they believed that changes in methodology had led to increased learner confidence, and under half (39/42%)

that changes in syllabus design had led to increased learner proficiency. Of the remainder, the majority indicated that they were unsure, with some of the comments pointing to the fact that this uncertainty related either to **(a)** lack of awareness of any indicators that could guide their judgments and/ or **(b)** insufficient experience on which to base a judgment.

The debate surrounding syllabus design that has taken place over the past few decades appears not to have had any negative impact on participants' confidence in relation to their ability to determine the content of core language development courses and skills-based courses. However, only approximately half of them believed that developments in the area of methodology over the past two decades have led to more relaxed and confident learners and fewer than half thought that developments in the area of syllabus design have led to increased learner proficiency.

5.5.3 Curriculum, syllabus and lesson planning

The vast majority of participants indicated that they believed that it was important to have a syllabus for each of the courses they taught (82/88%) and to plan the content of lessons before they began, while allowing for adaptation in response to students' ability to cope (92/ 99%). Although most of them indicated that they believed that it was important to have an explicit syllabus document for each of the courses they taught and to plan the content of lessons before they began, that planning appears not, in many cases, to extend to providing clearly articulated achievement objectives or to extend beyond the specific courses in which they are directly involved (See *Appendix 2, Table.16: Comments added by questionnaire respondents*) So far as achievement objectives/outcomes are concerned, although 73 (78%) of the participants indicated that they could provide a list of specific outcomes for each of their courses if asked to do so, only 62 (67%) provided an example, with the majority of these examples either **(a)** lacking language indicators altogether, or **(b)** being too general to be measurable. Very few were clearly indicative of what the students were expected to be able to do using the target language on completion of the course.

So far as integrated programme planning is concerned, only just over half of the participants (50/54%) indicated that they believed that all of the English courses that a student takes in any particular year should be directly related to one another, with a further 42% indicating that they were unsure about this (10/11%) or that they should not (29/31%). In addition, although almost all of the participants (82/88%) indicated that they would try to take account (*either in whole* (41/44%) *or in part* (41/45%)) in teaching a reading (or writing) course of the content of any parallel writing (or reading) course being taken by the same students at the same stage in their programme (often by using reading texts as models for writing texts), considerably fewer (an average of 55/59%) indicated that they would *actually* be aware (*either in whole* (an average of 40/43%) *or in part* (an average of 15/16%)) of the content of a reading/writing course if they were teaching a writing/reading course involving the same students at the same stage in their programme.

Asked how they decided what to include in each of their courses (selecting from a list of six possibilities, including 'Other' – of which they could select more than one), although over half indicated that they referred to a syllabus provided by their institution (50/54%) and/or made a decision each year in consultation with other teachers (32/34%) or with the teacher who taught the course in the previous year (26/28%), almost one third indicated that they selected all or part of a textbook they thought would be appropriate (24/26%) and/or just decided what would be best to include (35/38%). Asked what they would do if they were *not* provided with a syllabus for a course they were teaching by the institution where they worked, 37% indicated that they would either allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeds (23% overall; 67% of those teaching in Australia or New Zealand) or focus on materials and methodology *rather than* syllabus (14% overall; 69% of those teaching in Australia or New Zealand).

In response to a question asking whether the institution where they worked had an overall curriculum for the English courses it offered, more than one third (35/38%) either indicated that it did not (22/24%) or and that they did not know whether it had one or not (13/14%), with 2% failing to respond and fourteen

(14/15%) adding comments indicating that the curriculum documents that *were* made available to them were inadequate, incomplete or unhelpful. Asked to indicate on a five-point scale how useful they believed the syllabus documents made available by their institution to be, fifteen (15) did not respond. Of the seventy-eight (78) who did, the vast majority (65/83%) indicated that they believed them to be essential (14/18%), very useful (15/19%) or useful (36/46%), with far fewer (13/16%) indicating that they found them to be not very useful or not useful at all.

Although the vast majority of participants indicated that they believed that it was important to have a syllabus for each of the courses they taught (generally preferring a task-supported approach over a task-based one), to plan the content of lessons before they began and to take account in teaching particular courses of other courses being taken by the same students, only just over half indicated that they were actually aware of the content of other courses being taken by students in the same year as those they were teaching and/or believed that all of the English courses that a student takes in any particular year should be directly related to one another. In general, the syllabuses provided by institutions were appreciated. However, only approximately 60% indicated that the institution where they worked had an overall curriculum for the English courses taught and only just over half indicated that they referred to syllabuses provided by their institutions in determining the content of their courses. Furthermore, more than one third indicated that if they were not provided with a syllabus they would either allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeds or focus on materials and methodology rather than develop their own syllabus. In addition, very few provided examples of achievement objectives that were genuinely indicative of what the students were expected to be able to do using the language at the end of their courses.

5.5.4 Textbooks

Of those who responded to a question about the interaction between syllabus and textbook selection (53), approximately two thirds (33/62%) indicated that they decided on syllabus content *before* selecting textbooks and approximately one third (20/38%) that they selected interesting textbooks at an appropriate level for

their students, allowing these textbooks to determine the syllabus. Furthermore, twenty-six (26/28%) indicated that selecting an appropriate textbook was part of the process involved in deciding what to teach. However, thirty-two (32/ 35%) indicated that they had no choice about the textbooks they used. Of those who responded to a question about the basis for their textbook selection, fifty-one out of sixty-four (80%) indicated that they were motivated by the extent to which textbooks included the language they wanted to cover rather than by the activities they contained. Participants were asked whether, if they used a textbook from a particular series with a group of first year students, they would select the next highest level textbook from the same series for the same students when they were in their second year. Since textbook series are generally based on an overarching syllabus, this question was asked in an attempt to determine whether participants had any concerns about the discontinuities in relation to course content that could result from switching series, discontinuities that could be a major issue in cases where the textbooks themselves provided the syllabus rather than being used as an additional resource. Seventy-nine (79) of the participants responded. Of these, 38 (48% of the respondents) indicated that they did not know. Of the remaining forty-one (41), thirty-three (33) indicated that they would stick to the same series and eight (8) that they would not. Of the twenty-six (26) comments provided by respondents, none made reference to potential problems of discontinuity involved in moving from one textbook series to another.

In selecting textbooks, participants were considerably more likely to be motivated by the language they covered rather than the activities they included. However, almost one third indicated that they had no choice about the textbooks used for their courses and just over one fifth indicated that they allowed textbooks to determine course syllabuses.

5.5.6 The impact of discourse analysis on course content

Of the 79 participants who expressed a preference, an almost equal number indicated that they preferred (40) or preferred not (39) to focus at beginner and elementary level on words and sentences rather than on larger stretches of language. Participants were also asked which of a list of content types they would include at different levels in core language development courses. In response, a

majority indicated that they would include *vocabulary, language structures, tasks* and *activities* in core language development courses at all levels. However, only 79% indicated that they would include *language structures* at *beginner* level and, perhaps surprisingly, only 76% that they would include *tasks* at that level. In addition, only just over 50% indicated that they would include *learning strategies* at *beginner* level.

Responses relating to the inclusion of specific cohesive devices (e.g. *because*) and types of linkage between clauses (e.g. *comparison, contrast and exemplification*) raise a number of significant issues. Just over one third (35.5%) indicated that they would include *cohesive devices* at *beginner* level and just over three quarters (77%) that they would do so at *elementary* level. However, the number who indicated that they would include *types of linkage between clauses* at these levels was lower (13% and 43% respectively). Given the link between cohesion and textual coherence, this seems odd. It seems particularly odd when it is borne in mind that many national curriculum documents make reference (though often indirectly) in the very early stages of language learning to coherence and cohesion. Thus, for example, at Level 2 in the New Zealand curricula for French, German and *te reo Māori* (Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2002a, 2002b, 2009), we find the following achievement objectives: *Communicate about relationships between people; Communicate about likes and dislikes, giving reasons where appropriate*. Furthermore, in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, (Council of Europe, 2001) we find, the following (see Table 3 of the CEFR):

- A1:** Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like ‘and’ or ‘then’.
- A2:** Can link groups of words with simple connectors like ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘because’.
- B1:** Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.

- B2:** Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution.
- C1:** Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
- C2:** Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.

In the areas of coherence and cohesion, there were marked differences between the responses of participants who were teaching in New Zealand and Australia on the one hand and those who were teaching in Japan, Taiwan and Syria on the other. A considerably higher percentage of teachers from Australia and New Zealand indicated that they would include *cohesive devices* at *beginner* and *elementary* levels (43% and 86% respectively) than did teachers from Japan, Taiwan and Syria (27% and 29.5% respectively). Similarly, a higher percentage of teachers from Australia and New Zealand indicated that they would include *types of linkage between clauses* at *beginner* and *elementary* levels (16% and 55% respectively) than did teachers from Japan, Taiwan and Syria (9% and 29.5% respectively). This may be, in part at least, a reflection of the fact that students who are being taught in a context in which English is the dominant language are perceived by their teachers to have a greater immediate need for discourse processing skills. It may, however, also be because there has been considerable emphasis on genre-based teaching (in which coherence and cohesion play a major role) in mainstream teaching of English in Australia and New Zealand (i.e. contexts in which the primary focus is not EAL).

Responses to questions about **(a)** whether they would include ellipsis and substitution in their courses at different levels, and **(b)** which of a number of semantic relations and semantic relational encodings they would include at different levels were, in many ways, surprising, particularly when considered in

the context of responses to a question about which genres they would include at different levels.

So far as *ellipsis* is concerned, the percentage of positive responses (indicating inclusion) at each level was as follows: *beginner* (3%); *elementary* (24%); *intermediate* (57%); *advanced* (31%). In the case of *substitution*, the positive responses were as follows: *beginner* (4%); *elementary* (231%); *intermediate* (57%); *advanced* (22%). This seems odd in view of the fact that, for example, ellipsis is very common in sequential contexts (e.g. He came in and [. . .] sat down) and both ellipsis and substitution are very common in comparative, contrastive and sequential contexts (e. g. She left and *so* did Tom/ She has a cat and Tom has *one* too). It is even more surprising in view of the levels at which participants indicated they would include *recount* (52% at *beginner* level and 64% at *elementary* level) and *narrative* (41% at *beginner* level and 64.5% at *elementary* level) in which comparison and contrast are common and temporal sequence is unavoidable. Also surprising in this context is the fact that only 25% indicated that they would include *temporal sequence* at *beginner* level. Furthermore, although 45% of respondents indicated that they would include *description* at *beginner* level and 68% that they would do so at *elementary* level, only 25% indicated that they would include comparing and contrasting at *beginner* level (with the percentage for *elementary* level being 58%). It is, of course, perfectly possible to describe without comparing and contrasting. However, describing people and things in relation to similarities and differences is often included in national curriculum achievement objectives at the early levels.

The percentage responses relating to genres are also interesting in their own right. Thus:

- less than half (45%) indicated that they would include *description* at *beginner* level and only 68% that they would do so at *elementary* level;
- only approximately half indicated that they would include *recount* and *instruction* at *beginner* level (52% and 41% respectively) and fewer than

three quarters indicated that they would do so at *elementary* level (64% and 64.5% respectively);

- only just over half indicated that they would include *argument* at *intermediate* level (58%) and less than three quarters indicated that they would do so at *advanced* level (71%).

Asked to list three aspects of discourse they considered important, only twenty-eight (28/30%) responded, providing eighty-five (85) entries, of which several focused on the micro-level (e.g. vocabulary and sentence grammar). Although the number of non-responses suggests some uncertainty, many of the entries indicated that the respondents considered both macro-level and micro-level textual organization to be important.

Less than one third of participants responded to a request to indicate three aspects of discourse that they considered important and several of the responses focused on the micro-level. However, participants were almost equally divided on the issue of whether beginner and elementary courses should focus on words and sentences rather than larger stretches of language. Although a considerable number indicated that they would include recount, narrative and/or description at beginner level (52%, 42% and 45% respectively) and/or elementary level (approximately 64% in the first two cases and 68% in the third), very few indicated that they would include ellipsis, substitution and/or linkage between clauses at beginner level (3%, 4% and 13% respectively) and/or elementary level (23%, 24% and 14% respectively). Furthermore, although just over three quarters indicated that they would include cohesive devices at elementary level, only just over one third indicated that they would do so at beginner level, and although over half (58%) indicated that they would include comparing and contrasting at elementary level, only one quarter indicated that they would do so at beginner level. Furthermore, at intermediate level, less than three quarters indicated that they would include the argument genre. All of this is surprising in view of the characteristic content of national curriculum documents and the interaction between genre, cohesion and coherence.

5.5.7 In-service development preferences

Participants were asked which of a list of eight in-service development types they would find useful. It is interesting to note that testing and evaluation were in first place (68%), with materials design, technology, syllabus design, grammar teaching and skills-related teaching following (all between 46% and 52%) and with communicative teaching and class management in last place (with 37% and 32% respectively).

Participants' top priority in-service training priority was testing and evaluation, with only half selecting syllabus design and only just over one third selecting communicative teaching.

5.6 Conclusion

Participants in this questionnaire-based survey appear to be confident about their ability to determine what should be included in their courses and appear, in general, to prefer task-supported courses whose content is clearly articulated in syllabus documents and which are carefully integrated. However, more detailed analysis of the responses suggests that the high level of confidence may not be fully justified and that overall preferences may not reflect what actually happens in practice. Thus, for example, responses to questions relating to aspects of discourse analysis were, overall, contradictory and indicative of considerable confusion, and attempts to specify achievement objectives for particular courses were often unsuccessful. Furthermore, although personal experience clearly plays an important role in pedagogic decision-making, the almost exclusive reliance on personal experience exhibited in some cases (e.g. *I wasn't teaching 20 years ago; I left this blank because I rarely deal with intermediate and advanced learners*) suggests some unwillingness to engage with the discipline on a more theoretical level. At the same time, it is clear that some of the participants do have a sophisticated level of understanding of the issues involved in language syllabus design, although this may not be reflected in institutional practices (e.g. *We do have an overall curriculum but it's vague; Each teacher does his/her own thing*). For this reason, the data collected from semi-structured interviews with a selection of language programme managers/ co-ordinators reported in the next chapter is likely to be of particular relevance in relation to the thesis as a whole.

Chapter Six

Reporting on semi-structured interviews involving a sample of English language programme managers/co-ordinators working in the tertiary education sector in New Zealand

6.1 Introduction

More than one third of the participants in the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 4* indicated that the institution in which they worked either did not have an overall curriculum for the English courses offered or that they did not know whether it had one or not (13/14%), with fourteen (14/15%) adding comments indicating that the curriculum documents that *were* made available to them were inadequate, incomplete or unhelpful. This, combined with the fact that there seemed to be some major differences among participants in terms of their level of awareness of the types of issue that have preoccupied researchers in the area of English language teaching over the past few decades, and the very different views expressed concerning the types of content that were considered appropriate for courses of different types at different levels, raises a number of issues relating to (a) the background and training of teachers of English as an additional language, (b) the basis for their decision-making, (c) what is expected of them, and (d) the types of support made available to them. For this reason, it was decided to conduct a series of interviews with a selection of language centre managers and/or language programme co-ordinators in order to explore their expectations regarding teachers' qualifications, the professional development opportunities made available to teachers by their institutions, and aspects of the language curriculum. Patton (1980, p. 206) identifies four interview types: *informal conversational interviews*, *interview guided approaches*, *closed quantitative interviews*, and *standardised open-ended interviews*. It was decided that the last of these types, which closely resembles what Bogden and Biklen (1992) refer to as 'semi-structured interviews', would be most appropriate. In the case of standardised open-ended interviews, the order of the questions and their exact wording is organised in advance of the actual interview, thus facilitating the

analysis of the information provided by the respondents and comparison of these responses. Questions can be planned around specific information that the researcher wishes to access. However, there is the option of following up on interviewee responses in ways that may reveal information and opinion which, while perhaps not being of a type that had been anticipated, might nevertheless be of interest and relevance. One particular advantage here is that the sense of automaticity which can be associated with closed quantitative interviews is reduced and genuine responsiveness to interviewees' comments is facilitated.

Information about the participants (6.2), the nature of the interviews, and issues relating to research ethics (6.3) is followed by an outline of the data collected (6.4), a discussion of that data (6.5) and some concluding remarks (6.6). Transcripts of the interviews (with any data naming specific individuals or institutions being replaced by letters - e.g. X or Y) are included in *Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Transcripts of the Language Education Managers*.

6.2 The participants

All five of the interviewees are New Zealand-based and employed as either English language programme managers or English language programme co-ordinators in organizations that are attached to, or form part of, national universities or polytechnics. My decision to focus in this part of the research on New Zealand-based institutions was motivated by two main considerations. Firstly, I have a particular interest in language education in New Zealand as this is the country in which I am myself located. I therefore have more knowledge of the academic context in which potential interviewees are operating than would otherwise be the case and am better positioned to interpret any responses that require contextualization. Secondly, because I know many of the people working in English language education in New Zealand, it seemed likely that I would be more able to secure the involvement of potential interviewees than would be the case were I to attempt to include representatives from other countries. In addition, given the volume of data likely to be generated (which meant that the number of interviewees would necessarily be small), and the desirability of making inter-institutional comparisons, it made sense to focus on a single country with a relatively small number of English-language-based programmes. My decision to

focus on programme managers and co-ordinators operating in the context of national universities and polytechnics (rather than schools) was motivated by two considerations. Firstly, these institutions are not bound by national curriculum documents and are therefore free to make their own decisions about all aspects of the curriculum. Secondly, they generally have programme managers and/or programme co-ordinators whereas schools generally have neither, often assigning responsibility for oversight of all languages offered to a single senior teacher.

The sample is one of convenience. I contacted as many English language programme managers and co-ordinators as possible (most of whom I know on a professional basis) and interviewed all five of those who agreed to participate. In the event, two were from the same institution. However, one had oversight of the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) programme offered by that institution, whereas the other had oversight of the institution's GE (General English) programme. Of the five interviewees, three were involved in institutions attached to national universities and two in institutions attached to national polytechnics.

6.3 The nature of the interviews and considerations relating to research ethics

The interviews were standardised, open-ended (semi-structured) ones, that is, there was a list of pre-determined questions (see *Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Questions for Language Education Managers*).

Thus, although the questions were determined in advance, the interviews were not fully structured: a decision was made to (a) vary the ordering of the questions depending on responses, (b) include additional prompts and follow-up questions where it was considered necessary and/or useful to do so, and (c) explore any issues introduced by the interviewees that seemed directly relevant but that had not been anticipated in designing the questions. My decision to conduct interviews of this type was motivated by the fact that several issues emerged out of the questionnaire-based survey that I believed would benefit from further exploration from the perspective of programme managers and co-ordinators. Including these in pre-determined questions, and determining in advance that all of the questions on the list would be asked at some point meant that, subject to the willingness of

interviewees to respond to them, these questions were more likely to be addressed than would be the case if much of the interview time available (which, in all cases, was limited by the other demands on the interviewees' time) were devoted to issues raised by the interviewees that had not been anticipated in advance. Although this approach has its limitations, it was considered appropriate in this case given the overall focus of the research as a whole.

There were a total of 47 questions, many of which were related to one another, and some of which were asked as a group. These questions related to:

- courses offered by the institutions for which the interviewees work (*Questions 1–4 and Question 17*);
- skill-specific courses generally (*Questions 7–9*);
- writing courses (*Questions 10–12*);
- core language development courses (*Questions 15 & 16*);
- courses and level descriptors (*Questions 27–29*);
- course documentation (*Questions 30–38*);
- content focus of courses (*Question 39*);
- implementation of CEFR recommendations (*Questions 40 & 41*);
- proficiency-based courses and courses that focus on language-specific outcomes (*Questions 5 & 6*);
- the teaching of language 'rules' (*Questions 13 & 14*);
- textbook use (*Questions 18 & 19*);
- assessment (*Questions 20–23*);
- qualifications of teachers, professional development opportunities provided for them, and teachers' awareness of developments in the field of English language teaching/ learning (*Questions 24–26, Questions 42 & 43 and Questions 44–46*);
- additional comments (*Question 47*).

Prior to the interviews, each participant was advised in writing that:

- interviews would be recorded and written transcripts prepared;

- in order to protect the identity of participants, audio recordings would not be made available as part of the thesis and would not be used in any presentations or publications arising out of the research;
- neither the names of the interviewees, nor those of the institutions for which they worked would be made available in the thesis and neither would be used in any presentations or publications arising out of the research (pseudonyms being used);
- any references in the interviews that would be likely to reveal the identities of the participants or the institutions they represented would not appear in the written transcripts;
- written transcripts of the interviews would be made available to the interviewees who could then request or require that changes be made to them if they believed that they did not adequately represent their views.

The names of the interviewees have been changed to protect their identities. Following the interviews, it was decided that the documentation that was provided by interviewees that related to their institution's English curriculum would not be included in the main body of the thesis or in appendices but that; instead, reference would be made to short extracts from it (see 5.5) in order to avoid issues relating to commercial sensitivity.

6.4 The data

6.4.1 Teachers: Qualifications and professional development

Interviewees were asked what qualifications they expected teachers to have as a minimum, whether all of the teachers in their institution had done a course in language/s teaching, and whether they thought that all of these teachers had undergone an assessed teaching practicum.

Ann and Carol (from the same institution) indicated that the minimum qualification required was a *Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults* (CELTA), an international training and certification programme available in many centres throughout the world. However, Ann, who is responsible for the EAP [English for Academic Purposes] programme, said that an equivalent qualification

would be acceptable, and **Carol**, who is responsible for the general English programme, said that a Master's degree was the minimum requirement *in some cases*. **Ann** observed that “*we encourage all our teachers to have Post Grad diplomas and be working towards Master's degrees*”, adding that “*quite a few . . . are either pursuing a DELTA⁶⁶ or Master's right now*”. Both judged that all of the teachers would have undergone an assessed teaching practicum as part of their training. However, in making this judgment, **Ann** made reference to the CELTA (“*a CELTA, so I would say all of them*”) although there was no indication that a CELTA was required where teachers already had a Diploma or Master's degree.

Beth indicated that the minimum requirement was a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics (or equivalent) and estimated that “*probably 90%*” of the teachers in her centre had undergone an assessed teaching practicum.

Dawn noted that there was a specific minimum qualification requirement which she thought might be a “*CELTA or Postgrad*” and said that all of the teachers had done a course in teaching language/s. She was initially uncertain about what was meant in this context by the term ‘practicum’. However, following clarification by the interviewer, she judged that all of the teachers would have undergone one “*because they have to either have CELTA or a PGDip*”. When the interviewer observed that some Diploma and Master's qualifications did not include a teaching practicum, she added that “*we did have one [who had done one of these qualifications]*” but “*we can observe the teachers also, so that we, we were really happy*”.

Eve said that the minimum qualification required was a *Postgraduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching*. She believed that all but one of the teachers in her institution (who had a Master's degree in literature and was “*working towards an applied linguistics qualification*”) had a qualification in teaching language/s and that all except that teacher had undergone an assessed teaching practicum.

⁶⁶ The DELTA (Diploma in Language Teaching to Adults) is a professional qualification in English language teaching consisting of three modules awarded by Cambridge Assessment, a part of the University of Cambridge. The diploma may include related non-teaching responsibilities (administration, training of teachers, and so on) if candidates decide to complete the diploma's Module Three English Language Teaching Management (ELTM) option.

Interviewees were also asked what professional development opportunities, if any, were provided for their teaching staff and, if there were such opportunities, how decisions were made about what to offer. In addition, they were asked whether they believed it was important for the teachers in their institution to be aware of how the field of English language teaching had developed over time and whether – and, if so, how – they tried to ensure that they were aware of important developments in language teaching, past and present.

In response to the first and second of these questions, all of the interviewees indicated that professional development opportunities were made available.

Ann⁶⁷ observed that her institution used to provide professional development sessions (a combination of in-house presentations and presentations by external speakers) at a specific time every second week, but that, due to split shifts, each session would have had to run twice had this practice continued. She added that the current approach to professional development involved external speakers, in-house workshops that teachers could opt into, and small working groups of four teachers meeting frequently (“*I think it’s once a month*”), with two of them taking responsibility for discussion topics. She also noted that the institution assisted teachers financially with their studies and with conference attendance. As part of her response to a different question, however, she seemed to link professional development and performance management, noting that “*we have quite a strong PD programme operating*” and adding that “*we have . . . a performance management system for teachers, which is quite tricky because teachers don’t like to be performance measured*”.

Beth observed that professional development entitlements were ‘generous’, including up to two weeks of professional development time for full-time staff members and a specific sum of money towards course fees or conference attendance (where teachers were presenting at the conference), free access to relevant programmes offered by the institution, and funding and time to undertake

⁶⁷ As Carol works in the same institution as Ann, only one of them was asked these two questions.

research. She added that “*staff have taken the opportunity to up-skill and taken on Master’s, some are doing doctorates at the moment*”, that what professional development they undertook was “*very much people’s own decision*” and that there was a current need for up-skilling “*in the area of online or whatever*”.

Dawn noted that professional development sessions were held every week and that the teachers could apply to attend courses. She added that a role in professional development was played by ‘student learning support’ and by co-ordinators and team leaders who observed teachers, noting that professional development was provided when “*we see . . . a need for certain things*” or when “*anything new . . . [came] up that would be . . . of general interest*”.

Eve noted that the teachers themselves or their managers could suggest areas for professional development and that these could be linked to ‘performance review’. An extract from her response is included below:

Every alternate Friday we have a PD session . . . where the experienced staff run sessions as refreshers for other experienced staff and as new sessions for less experienced staff and they might be on classroom management techniques, or use of the phonemic chart, how to . . . teach grammar in a meaningful, interactive way, or a whole range of things. And then the Fridays in-between we have . . . guest speakers . . . and we deliver too on topics to do with research, or reporting back on conferences and just elements of interest like that The last one we had was a session . . . on IELTS. We also have a whole host of PD available from within . . . and there are all kinds of things like how to use Excel, how to use the learning platform, how to write lesson plans, a whole range of things. We have attendance at conferences. We have also literacy and numeracy training, and I have several staff enrolled in further qualifications. We have . . . some staff involved in research. We have a genuine interest in developing a research culture . . . and we have a research leader appointed who looks after that. I’m trying to build a very strong academic, capable staff. (**Eve**)

Asked whether they believed that it was important for teachers to be aware of how English language teaching developed, all replied in the affirmative.

Four of the interviewees were also asked how they tried to ensure that their teachers were aware of important developments in language teaching, past and present (Q44).⁶⁸ In response, **Beth**, in addition to referring to professional development opportunities generally, noted that her institution had “a huge . . . online resource through our library” so that “people have the opportunity to keep up to date”. **Carol** also made reference to professional development opportunities generally, adding that her institution engaged in performance management. **Dawn** was less confident in her response, initially asking for clarification of the question and then saying “[h]opefully that will come up through a lot of the PD sessions”. **Eve** noted that “part of it is covered by the fact that I expect staff [to have] . . . a Post Grad Diploma So, part of that training is that you look at past teaching methods and how people teach now. But we do also have conversations about teaching in general”. She also made the following observation:

I haven't focussed on the how in the past . . . and that . . . could actually be another for an academic hour. That's a really good topic. We could look at, you know, transition from grammar translation method. That would be quite interesting actually, especially for new teachers that would be interesting. (*Eve*)

6.4.2 The curriculum

6.4.2.1 Courses offered

Interviewees were asked what types of course were offered by their institution, why these courses were offered and whether the content of courses varied a lot from year to year.

According to **Ann** and **Carol** (responses combined), their institution offered both general English language courses (GE) and academically-oriented ones (EAP). *The general English programme* was described as including five modules, each

⁶⁸ Ann was not asked this question – an error on the part of the researcher.

involving 80 hours of tuition (plus options), with the first module being introductory and the fifth being “*equivalent to advanced level*” (*Ann*). Each module was said to have a research component and to be made up of textbook-based core language development lessons and lessons that were skills-based or involved IELTS preparation or Business English. In this context, specific reference was made to *Cutting Edge* and *New Headway*. It was noted that the top two modules could be combined for a Certificate qualification – graded A (appropriate for specific postgraduate programmes, such a law, and said to be equivalent to IELTS band 7), B (appropriate for other postgraduate programmes), or C (appropriate for undergraduate programmes). *The academically-focused English programme* was described as having five levels and as combining a language focus and either an academic skills/strategies focus (involving textbook & task-based projects) or an IELTS preparation focus.

Beth said that her institution offered academic English courses (EAP) at three levels (Intermediate to Advanced), focusing on vocabulary development, micro-skills and reading, writing, listening, and speaking, the top two levels involving preparation for undergraduate study.

Dawn indicated that her institution offered a *general English programme* (GE) with seven levels (the first four focusing on grammar and the others on skills) as well as *Business English courses* and programmes for a variety of special groups whose members, however, generally joined the academic or general programmes.

Eve said that her institution offered *general English courses* (GE) at six levels (from Beginner to Advanced), academically-focused English (EAP) courses at four levels (the top one being described as Advanced and being combined with mainstream study and including subject/discipline-related vocabulary and topics) and a range of other courses with titles such as *Easy English*, *Literacy*, *Workplace literacy*, *Migrant Mothers* and *IELTS*.

Asked why their institution had chosen to offer these courses, the interviewees responded as indicated in the following extracts:

That's a good question. I don't know. I have been here four years and it's always been like that. As long as I have been here it's been that way. . . . I think that's not dissimilar to a lot of language institutes, to have that core component and then an optional component. . . . [T]he programme that I am the head of is the Academic English course and our goal is to prepare students for study at a tertiary institute. . . . so at the Module 4 level they do a 1500 word research essay, fully cited, paraphrasing, in-text citations, summarising, APA referencing. We teach that skill and then they do an oral presentation with PowerPoint slides at all levels. But obviously it gets longer and bigger as they go. The second lesson. . . . at the introduction and Module one level their second lesson is really a continuation of the first - really heavily language- focused because that's really what they need. From module 2, 3 and 4, their option – they can either take IELTS because they need that to get into their tertiary programme or they can take an academic skills course, which is a combination of using a textbook and it's got task-based projects interspersed. (*Ann*)

Ok, basically we're the *University of X* and so our prime job is to feed people into the university. Often people don't have enough English to start on an academic programme so we have the general English programme (GE) working on site. But then some students actually just want to come for three weeks or five weeks or and improve their English generally and they're not actually going to study in English so – and also I think we also offer the general English programme courses also for some of the Japanese universities will actually give them credit for having studied for this many hours so they study in General English so the idea is to improve their speaking and listening which is not so easy to do in Japan. (*Carol*)

Ok, because I mean there is the Certificate in English language courses. The Mission Statement was to help migrants and refugees settle successfully in New Zealand so it used to have a far wider brief, including socio-cultural information, you know, so that people have the survival

skills really to be able to understand how to participate effectively in NZ society. The focus is increasingly less on that, and now its focus is very much on Academic English and . . . the reason for that is because that's the rule. . . . [W]e're trying to maintain our programmes and one of the ways we've done that is make it very academic, a very strong academic English orientation so . . . it's not community English any more. It's English for, in preparation for undergraduate studies. . . . I suppose you can call them ESP really - English for . . . academic study which is, you know – the special purpose being academic study. (*Beth*)

I suppose one to four you're developing the, to get target language . . . for the grammar, so that they've got that for writing . . . We're developing though. We also develop skills in listening and reading and speaking. (*Dawn*)

We offer other courses too, but these ones because it's to meet student need. Because IELTS 6, to go into mainstream, IELTS 6, is . . . it's not enough to stand independently and to just let them go. So it was . . . in response to a demand . . . both from the students and from mainstream staff, that students needed more support in mainstream. But also, going from where we offered just pure advanced English and then off they went and got an IELTS 6 or they were recommended into mainstream, we found also that really the best support is if there's a transition phase where they do English plus their mainstream study . . . and then they're much better prepared to stand on their own in their degrees. But even so, I'd like to offer more support actually and I've seen a model for that at another institution where they have language support embedded right through the degree, all the way through, and it's a very successful model. So, that's where I'd like to aim. . . . We also have other low level programmes. We have literacy and we have workplace literacy and, um, TOPS programme training opportunities, um, and programmes we call *Easy English* and *Migrant Mothers* that are designed for, um, people with a refugee

background or migrants who have very low levels of English. So we have a wide range of programmes. And IELTS, we offer IELTS as well. (*Eve*)

Asked whether the content of courses varied a lot from year to year, Beth and Dawn indicated that they did not. However, Dawn added that they were being “updated all the time”.

Eve responded as follows:

No, it hasn't done. It will be tweaked slightly depending on the particular cohort . . . and what their strengths are and weaknesses and so on, their particular learning needs. But the curriculum documents have not been changed for some time and they are right in the process of being changed as we speak. (*Eve*)

Ann and Carol (from the same institution) appeared to differ in their views about the extent to which courses changed. With reference to the academic English programme, Ann noted that it had had “a massive . . . overhaul over the last two years”, adding that it was still not perfect but that “there is also no such thing as the perfect course because you don't know who your students are and what may have worked beautifully with one group might not work.” With reference to the same programme, Carol said “I think we have a curriculum. We vary the curriculum a little bit . . . We tute with it a little and we don't make dramatic leaps because we've sort of, we have an endpoint in view”.

With reference to the general English programme, Ann said that it had not changed as much as the academic one. Referring to its core component, she said that “for 10 weeks they'll use Cutting Edge and then the next 10 weeks they'll use New Headway and then they alter the course books every 10 weeks”. Referring to the other component, she said that “it's always under development because they are in-house produced, skills-based lessons” which “they try to update” but added that the capacity to update regularly depended on “time . . . and resources”. She noted that in the last year “they've really had a good look at all of the lessons and

. . . they've said . . . 'which ones are working not at all and we'll pull those out' and they've started slowly replacing them". **Carol**, on the other hand, said: "I think the general language courses change from almost every week . . . from block to block and week to week because it depends on if you've got a class full of Brazilian students or lots of Brazilian students then or Saudi Arabian students . . ."

6.4.2.2 Curriculum documents

Interviewees were asked a series of questions about their institutional curricula, including whether courses were described in terms of levels, and, if so, whether they included statements describing the different levels and whether an example could be provided. They were also asked whether there were documents that outlined the content of each of the courses and, if so, how detailed these documents were, whether they included a list of objectives/outcomes/'can do' statements and, if so, whether an example could be supplied. In addition, they were asked whether these documents included specific language that was to be taught and, if so, how it was described, whether they included reference to the nature of tests and examinations, who was responsible for design of these documents, and whether anything was done to make sure that teaching staff had read them. Finally, they were asked whether their institution implemented any of the recommendations included in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the reasons why they did or did not.

Provided below are responses to questions about whether courses were described in terms of levels and if so, whether they included statements describing the different levels and whether an example could be provided.

All five interviewees indicated that their courses were described in terms of levels and that there were statements describing the different levels. **Eve** added:

Yes we do, but we are just in the process, because we had the old curriculum document that wasn't adequate. We're just in the process of going through that so it's not completed, but we do, yeah. (**Eve**)

She also made the following observation, an observation that is particularly interesting in view of the fact that the CEFR is explicit about its avoidance of terms such as ‘intermediate’:

Ah well we got that link to the Common European Framework. So, for example Intermediate is what would internationally be called Intermediate, Upper Intermediate would internationally be called Upper Intermediate. And then for the advanced [Certificate] classes, 1, 2, 3 and 4 the entry point for, for CA 1 is IELTS 5. So, we benchmarked that, those 4 levels with IELTS but not the General English levels, only the academic English levels. (*Eve*)

None of the interviewees was able to provide from memory a clear example of a level descriptor statement. *Ann* commented as follows:

No, I can't think of one, but I can certainly show them to you after. (*Ann*)

She did, in fact, provide an outline of the Academic English courses which includes statements divided into several categories (writing; reading; listening; vocabulary/language; and speaking & research). References to that document and extracts from it are included in the discussion section of this chapter.

The responses of *Beth*, *Carol*, *Dawn* and *Eve* are included below:

I would have to find one for you. I can send it to you . . . I don't know off the top of my head. (*Beth*)⁶⁹

We have like say, say an elementary course and I think the descriptor is something like - *this course um presents the basic structures in English and bla bla bla* and then intermediate might be *this course has built on the foundations of English* – and the advanced course it would be like *extends the* - So they're kind of pretty broad descriptions I have to say. But we do

⁶⁹ In the event, she chose not to send the documentation to which she referred.

have descriptors and the module, the academic courses definitely have descriptors for each level. (*Carol*)

Ok, oh this might be the quickest, because it is in the . . . calendar there is one thing. We have our outcome descriptors - Just a moment and I'll actually just show you. It's probably easier [calls up the descriptors on the computer]. Ok, so that is what is in the . . . paper. That is what is a general outcome and then all the specific learning objectives from there. Ok, for the different levels, so yeah. (*Dawn*)

Dawn supplied copies of the level descriptors covering seven levels. Extracts from these documents are included in the discussion section of this chapter.

Interviewees were asked whether there were documents that outlined the content of each of the courses and, if so, how detailed these documents were, whether they included a list of objectives/outcomes/'can do' statements and whether, if so, an example could be supplied, whether they included specific language that was to be taught and, if so, how it was described.

Although one of the interviewees (*Ann*) provided a detailed response, neither she nor any of the other interviewees provided clear answers to all of the questions along with examples. Furthermore, some of the responses provided appear to be contradictory.

Carol said that the course outlines for academic English courses were “quite detailed because every week had specific aims”. So far as specific outcomes are concerned, she noted that the academic courses included “‘the aim of the course’ or ‘this course teaches’ or something like this”, concluding “so yeah it’s outcomes-based”. With reference to the academic English programme, *Ann* said that “each level gets a student handbook at the beginning of a course” and that that handbook includes a “brief description of the skills, so it might say ‘reading’ and it will say ‘skimming, scanning, reading authentic texts, note taking, summarizing’”. She added that “everything has been typed up, beautifully,

formatted”, that courses included “*all the skills and objectives for each module*” and “*course goals and objectives [are] broken down by skill areas*” in a “*kind of a holistic view*”. Referring to the situation in the past, she said:

. . . four years ago we were using in-house produced course books that had been developed by someone down at Department X at Y and they had been produced about 10 years ago I think so . . . they were quite outdated and they . . . weren’t written in-house. They were a collaboration of various texts thrown together and they were photocopies of photocopies of photocopies um and we didn’t have a clear um syllabus or course objectives. (*Ann*)

Ann said that that she believed that there were no documents relating to the content of the general English courses However, *Carol* indicated that she believed that there were ‘descriptors’ for the general English courses but that they were ‘*much broader*’ [than in the case of the academic English programme].

Beth said that her institution did have documents that outlined the content of each of the courses but that there was “*some flexibility for the lecturer too*”. She observed that although these documents were “*fairly detailed*”, they probably did not include specific language to be taught (“*Not specific language – probably no. . . I doubt that it will be kind of right down to the specifics*”) but that “*the academic word list is there*”. She added that she had not actually looked at these documents for a while.

Dawn noted, after searching for the documentation on the Internet, that “our learning objectives . . . they’re the outcome” but “no, it’s not as far as the overview goes” although they include “the topics and text is the function structures” and “the different skills”.

Eve indicated that there were curriculum documents but that they were currently being rewritten and were within nine days of being completed. She added:

. . . the next step that's already been planned is the syllabus development. And the syllabus development will have the detail that builds from the curriculum document. So, the curriculum document, I mean an experienced teacher could take the curriculum document and teach from that but we need the syllabus that has the nitty gritty of exactly what the content is at the point of grammar level. (*Eve*)

Asked how course content would be described in the syllabus documents, she responded as follows:

Um, I think, I think we need to have it in terms of, um, quite specific, so that someone could come and someone who hadn't taught here before could come in and pick up that syllabus and know exactly what any level needs to have covered. Um, and we're also planning a bank of resources that will be held electronically that will be at the level of lesson plans. So, that doesn't mean that an experienced teacher can't tweak that and deliver in their own way. But it has to be, from a point of quality control and guaranteeing the learning outcomes. It will be reasonably prescriptive and I think it needs to be. It doesn't mean that an experienced teacher can't still put their own, you know, teach their own way and it will always have to be tweaked according to a particular cohort at any one time. So, you know, just because it says, you know, *this level will learn the present perfect* or whatever it is, it doesn't mean that each level will need the same concentration of time or energy put into teaching present perfect. But it needs to be – the content must be what will achieve the learning outcomes by the end and there has to be some continuity with that. There can't be, each teacher just *goes and shuts the door and does their own thing.* (*Eve*)

Asked whether the documents that were available included reference to the nature of tests and examinations, Ann observed that documents given to students included “what skills they'll be examined on”. *Beth, Carol* and *Eve* did not indicate whether the documents made reference to the nature of tests and examinations. *Dawn* said that they did, but provided no further detail or comment.

Asked who is/was responsible for the design of curriculum and syllabus documents, the interviewees responded as follows:

Right, so X is the academic manager. So she oversees all the programs and courses. There is a senior teacher for Gen English . . . so she oversees the Gen English program. So she's looking at textbooks and developing programs, topics etc., but she needs final approval for any major changes from X. And I oversee the academic program and . . . if there are any major decisions then I run them by X. But a lot of the day-to-day sort of research and that, I make those final decisions, and I just relay that information. (*Ann*)

I guess X does it and in conjunction with, I'm overall responsible for that. (*Carol*)

. . . they've been around for a while and they're reviewed from time to time. (*Beth*)

Ok that was done by X when, yeah and with the team leaders. (*Dawn*)

That's the programme committee and that's the teaching team – is a particular team I've put together. I pulled from the staff a team for the General English curriculum document and a team for the Advanced English curriculum document - from the experienced staff who had knowledge across the different areas and together, in conjunction with our X Unit, they have been writing the content for those documents. And now that has to be approved and signed off from our programme committee meeting and then it will go to the X Unit. It has to meet their guidelines and their - you know, and we have to get through that. And that's quite a

strict panel there who are pressure tested, seriously and ask us a lot of difficult questions and then it will go on to NZQA and ITPQ⁷⁰. (*Eve*)

Asked whether anything was done to make sure that teaching staff had read the relevant documents, the interviewees responded as follows⁷¹:

That's a good question. So, I have two project leaders who report to me and they have very short meetings each week with their teams. . . . and they . . . make sure that everybody is on track, so they would say things like 'Has everybody gone over the...' . . . So, there is a little bit of that, but to what extent teachers - I suspect some teachers spend more time going through the document than others. Some teachers might expect the students to read it for themselves and some might go through it. I'm not exactly sure how it's delivered, but I know that it is definitely delivered. (*Ann*)

I don't know for sure, but . . . it is ensured. We have programme leaders and they will make sure that - I don't know that the lecturers - I mean lecturers tend to stay in a particular area. When they move to a new area then they will get the documentation and read through it but otherwise, I don't know. (*Beth*)

They have meetings every week, like the academic ones, 'cos they're very specific. They have meetings every week and if they're for the next week, well these are the aims for the course or this is what we need to do. The general language ones are, as I explained, are looser. (*Carol*)

They do and we start off with meetings, we have in- between blocks, so they are in there. What the level we assume they are going to teach, and they meet together, they sit down with me. We go through the planner.

⁷⁰ NZQA = New Zealand Qualifications Authority; ITPQ = Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality. Since 1 January 2011, quality assurance services for Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics have been provided by NZQA under an agreement reached between ITP New Zealand Inc and the NZQA Board

⁷¹ Unfortunately, I neglected to ask one of the interviewees - Eve - this question.

They are given all the documents we have, our information manuals, they get everything like that. And then they work together as a team, and usually have meetings often, once a week. (*Dawn*)

Interviewees were asked whether their institutions implemented any of the recommendations included in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the reasons why they did or did not. The responses were as follows:

I don't really know the answer to that – but I know that they've been looking at the Common European Framework and the - more for General English rather than Academic English, and they're looking at having individualized student study plans and they're looking at using the Common European Framework as sort of a reference to how they can look at the can-do statements and everything for General English. (*Ann*)

So we've actually made a curriculum around the Common European Framework. But only for writing, not for anything else, and why that is, I don't know. (*Carol*)

As part of her response to a different question (one relating to how the content of course tests and examinations is determined), however, *Carol* said:

So who determines for General English? They're taken from the Common European Framework . . . descriptors and they may not match entirely because they don't entirely like match with into elementary print and – but they kind of are taken from there. So, students at upper and intermediate level should be able to write or writing should be – they can write in an organized way, they can organize their writing, they can do this - So that's the kind of thing and the descriptors are based on those as well, yeah. (*Carol*)

I don't know. I'd have to go and have a look. (*Beth*)

In the case of **Dawn** (see below), interviewer prompts are included:

No.

(Interviewer: And can you maybe tell me why not?)

Well when you say, um, can you give me some specific examples of the European Framework? . . . I mean they have, where they've got criteria or descriptors or the rubrics, we have used those.

(Interviewer: So the assessment rubrics?)

Yes.

(Interviewer: But you've not used the 'can-do' statement part of the documents?)

No. (**Dawn**)

Eve first made reference to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* in response to a question about whether the courses offered by her institution were described in terms of levels:

Are you talking in Common European Framework terminology or - ?

(Interviewer: Generally)

In terms of intermediate, upper intermediate and so and, yes, yes.

(Interviewer: And do you have statements that describe the different levels?)

Yes we do, but we are just in the process, because we had the old curriculum document that wasn't adequate. We're just in the process of going through that so it's not completed, but we do, yeah.

(Interviewer: So you can't give me an example, like one of those statements or what they say?)

Ah well we got that link to the Common European Framework. So, for example Intermediate is what would internationally be called Intermediate, Upper Intermediate would internationally be called Upper Intermediate. And then for the advanced classes CA 1, 2, 3 and 4 the entry point for, for

CA 1 is IELTS 5. So, we benchmarked that, those 4 levels with IELTS but not the General English levels, only the academic English levels. (*Eve*)

Later in the interview, the interviewer said: You said that you implement some of the Common European Framework of Reference Recommendations? Can you tell me why? *Eve's* response is printed below:

Because we want to be, um, academically robust and we want to make sure that we, um, aligned with what's considered best practice internationally. We want to be able to benchmark what we do and our students' levels so that we're confident that they're ready for what we think they are ready for. Um, and also within NZ with reputable institutions in NZ and Australia, we want to be aligned with what is best practice. (*Eve*)

6.4.2.3 Main focus of the majority of courses

Interviewees were asked what the main focus of the majority of courses taught in their institution was (e.g. grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills, learning skills, or some combination of these). Carol replied that the main focus was language skills. All of the others indicated that it was a combination of everything referred to, with *Beth* adding: *We don't just do language and we don't just do um grammar. No, definitely not just grammar, not just vocabulary either. I mean you can't. So it has to be a combination.*

6.4.2.4 The teaching of language rules

Interviewees were asked whether they thought that language rules should be taught explicitly, implicitly or not at all and what they thought their teachers generally did. An extract from Ann's response is provided below:

I definitely think it should be taught . . . preferably implicitly. I think it's best to exploit texts or things and elicit the language from the students rather than say *Here is the present simple*. But when you draw it out from the students, then getting the focus on form and meaning but I think the best thing is to elicit it from context. . . . I think context is really

everything and that can be grammar and vocabulary. I think context is crucial, because teaching any of those things without a context is just a, a waste of time . . . (*Ann*)

So far as what she thought the teachers actually do is concerned, *Ann* said:

I think it's a mixture. . . . I'm not in the classes so I mean we do do observations and I get snippets here and there. But I do, I have seen, at the photocopier the dreaded Murphy book sitting there and so I know if someone's used that in class. I understand why they've done it but I don't think it's getting the desired effect. I think at the higher levels teachers tend not to focus on language because there's an assumption that students have it, but then they're frustrated that they're not producing it. So, I think at the higher levels there is a tendency to ignore language and I think it still has to be a part of what we do. At the lower levels I think sometimes people struggle. They know that they need it. . . . I think some teachers are more comfortable with grammar than others and I think the ones who are comfortable with grammar probably exploit it more than those who aren't and I think it's probably a real range between people teaching it quite explicitly or implicitly and those who are not doing it at all. And I think that's generally because the teachers themselves are not confident or comfortable I would say it's a real mix of what actually goes on. (*Ann*)

An extract from *Beth's* response is printed below:

Oh, I'm a great believer, this is just my personal view, about explicit. Draw your attention, focus on form. . . . I would say that most of them . . . would follow that explicit approach because . . . we are very strong believers in . . . people . . . who talk about the importance of focus on form, noticing . . . the need for input and output in order to develop language proficiency. So I think people . . . very much, adhere to . . . that philosophy, that approach. (*Beth*)

Carol responded to the first question as follows:

I think both implicitly and explicitly . . . because . . . a lot of students don't. I mean, basically I think implicitly but I think a lot of students don't notice and so I think they need to kind of, yeah. (*Carol*)

This is what she had to say regarding what she believed the teachers in her institution actually did:

I think it varies, yeah, I think it varies. I think some people love teaching grammar. (*Carol*)

Dawn indicated that, for her, a combined approach was best: *I don't ever see one thing as being . . . a one way to do it*. She responded as follows to the question about what approach she believed the teachers in her institution generally took (interviewer interpolations have been included):

Because the writing is so guided they – When you say explicitly what do you –

(Interviewer: *I'm saying that they are taught this particular grammar explicitly, like they are taught: this is how it functions, this is how, where you find it, this is the structure, but if it's taught implicitly it's like they are taught around other information and that comes out as you're teaching*)

No, because, see, they're taught the grammar, so then they are expecting that to be in the writing.

(Interviewer: *So it's taught mostly explicitly then?*)

Yeah. . . . Yeah, I was gonna say, because no, because yeah, um.

(Interviewer: *Because if that's what they do then possibly it's more explicitly. There is clearly a focus, a language focus?*)

But it's not all a language focus that's the thing, so yeah.

(Interviewer: *So it is a combination?*)

Yeah, it is really, yeah. (*Dawn*)

Eve replied to the first question with 'both'. Her response to the second question was as follows:

. Yes, there's explicit teaching and especially at the lower levels and, um, but there's also incidental teaching as it comes up, as you have to at the teachable moment, you know when it's the right time to teach something explicitly, but yeah there are many different, I think they have a good understanding that there have to be multiple approaches. (*Eve*)

6.4.2.5 Core language development courses: Input and practice

Interviewees were asked, with reference to a core language development course, how much time they thought teachers should spend on (a) teaching new language and (b) practising using new language, and how much time they thought the teachers in their institutions actually spent on each of these.

The following is an extract from *Ann*'s response:

Well what I would like to see people doing is . . . extracting the language from something be it a listening or a reading. Extracting the language, getting students kind of using it without even realizing they're using it, then elicit the form, get the form right, then get the meaning right and then practicing it in as many different ways as possible - written, spoken. So I would see more emphasis on use, than actually focusing on the structure itself. . . . I think a lot has to do with the level that you are working at because at a starter level . . . they have so little vocabulary it is difficult to really extract it from context 'cos as soon as you give the context, half the vocabulary they don't know so then you spend all the time on the vocabulary but you can't repeat it enough. You really have to go over the form form, form, form, form, form, form, form a lot more than I would expect. You'd have to go over form at an intermediate or a higher level so, I think level . . . plays a key factor in how much time you'd focus on form and how much time you would practice on production. (*Ann*)

She indicated that she believed that the teachers in her institution probably spent more time on practice.

Beth said that she believed that “*for 50% of the time . . . we need to be creating opportunities for students to . . . really reuse the language that they’ve come across before*”, adding that this is what an experienced teacher would probably do. **Carol** said that she believed that “*practising is more important*” and that the teachers in her institution probably spent more time on practising. **Dawn** opted for a 30/70 split, with 70% of the time spent on language practise and said that this would, she believed, be a typical time distribution within her institution. **Eve** was less definite in her response:

. . . in terms of ratios, 50/50 or something like that. . . . I haven’t thought about that . . . but I guess, it’s probably something like 20/80. I would think that maybe 20% is new and 80% is reinforcing and using what’s already been taught.

So far as what is generally done by teachers in her institution, she responded as follows:

I suspect it is far too much emphasis on the new and not enough on the revision . . . because I think there tends to be a tendency to teach to the test and probably people are galloping through a huge amount of content at the expense of making sure they solidify what has already been taught. That’s just my gut feeling. (**Eve**)

6.4.2.6 Decision-making: Responsibility and process

Asked who makes decisions about the content of courses and programmes and how these decisions are made, the interviewees responded as follows:

Right, so X is the academic manager. So X oversees all the programs and courses. There is a senior teacher (Y) for General English . . . so Y oversees the General English program. So Y is looking at textbooks and developing programs, topics etc., but she needs final approval for any

major changes from X. And I oversee the academic program and . . . again if there are any major decisions then I run them by X. But a lot of the day-to-day sort of research and that, I make those final decisions, and I just relay that information. (*Ann*).

. . . the academic programme . . . decisions are primarily made with X [the academic manager] and – but in conjunction with Z Department. So the course is basically developed by X and then the Z Department. They moderate our course and moderate our programme. The General English programmes, I can't actually say there is . . . an actual curriculum for those courses. Although we've just brought in a writing curriculum, so that the teachers are all studying, that the students are doing a selection of different types of writing and that is erm. . . . that is. . . the person who makes those decisions is the senior teacher for general English in conjunction with . . . um. . . other teachers. We kind of decide, yeah, but the actual curriculum for General English is actually very much . . . it's very loose because the st. . . ., it's not like you've been here for this many weeks so you've done this kind of things, 'cos it depends on the students and the class at the time. And we, we encourage the teachers to adapt materials and use materials but they basically are using our course book. (*Carol*)

Um, well, . . .I mean if we're talking currently, which is the academic English focus, it's the lecturers who are deciding what goes in and that's based on their interactions. They're teaching at undergraduate level, so they know what the requirements are – their discussions with the lecturers in the undergraduate programmes, the discipline specialists - so that they know what the requirements are in terms of standard academic English requirements so – and their own experience so that's really what they base the programme on. (*Beth*)

At the moment it is me in consultation with, um teachers and team leaders. . . Usually [at] meetings. (*Dawn*)

. . . the programme managers and the programme committee. We have programme committee meetings – so that's in conjunction with me and the programme managers and that's informed by what's coming from the teachers and the team meetings. . . [It's at] programme committee meetings those decisions are made. (*Eve*)

6.4.2.7 Course content and decision-making: Writing courses as an example

As a way of determining what sort of considerations interviewees brought to bear on deliberations concerning course content, they were asked *what sort of things they believed should be included in a writing course, and what sort of things they believed teachers actually included, with an example*. Extracts from the responses are included below, beginning with **Ann**'s response:

Well, I guess it depends what the purpose is. I think in General English there tends to be a lesser focus on writing than there is in an academic programme . . . At the lower levels we really focus on grammatical accuracy, range of structures, sentence structure and then that fills sort of from the lowest level getting a, a good sentence, from a simple sentence to a complex, compound sentence accurately. Then going to a paragraph – introduction, body, conclusion – looking at cohesive devices, then shifting to a simple three, um three paragraph essay – introduction, body, conclusion – and really process-driven and then getting to longer essays and then looking at all the genres. The way that we do it, we start with descriptive essays, narrative, compare and contrast, advantages and disadvantages, process, discursive and finally argumentative at the highest level and in there we also introduce summary writing and paraphrasing at the highest level, because that's such a difficult skill. So, I think the focus at the lowest levels is heavy on the language and getting an accurate simple sentence and then expanding on that throughout and then of course the appropriate cohesive devices and the appropriate grammar for writing a process or writing a comparative um, compare, contrast and at the higher levels really exploiting vocabulary and a range of structures because, certainly when we mark writing we're looking at four categories usually and that's task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical range and

accuracy, and grammatical range and accuracy. So that's what we are expecting from them, so that's what we're trying to input into them. (*Ann*)

In Carol's response to the first question she referred to the CEFR:

Ok, well basically, like for an academic course we would look at what they're needing to do at the university. So, if they're needing to write a research essay or - a lot of our students now go on and do PhDs, so they need to be able to do annotated bibliographies and that kind of thing or summary writing and paraphrasing, so it depends on purpose really. In the General English, more core skills course, I think we've now made a curriculum. So, we've some 'can-do' statements from the European Framework so they're saying like 'a student at elementary should be able to, they can do this, and they can fill in a form and they can do whatever it is. They can write a simple letter, they can...' So we've actually made a curriculum around the Common European Framework. But only for writing, not for anything else, and why that is, I don't know. (*Carol*)

The interviewer: then provided a prompt: *Interesting... Um, so in relation to this, to the question about writing, what sort of, 'cos you gave me your view, what sort of things do you think your teachers generally teach in writing courses?*

OK, well again, that has been very very loose. Different teachers teach whatever, depending on what they like. So for example, we've got a teacher here who loves poetry and poems and dramas, so his students tend to write lots of role plays and that kind of thing, whereas you know a teacher who's got more of a business bias might actually teach them how to write a letter of complaint or something else. So that's why we've tried to, that's why we've changed the academic courses more around - like Module 1 is like writing a decent paragraph, Module 2 is writing a simple essay with - a structured essay and some summary writing, Module 3 is getting into um writing different kinds of essay like problem-solution, compare and contrast and paraphrasing. We introduce paraphrasing, and

then module 4 is extending these out further and they write actually a 1500 word research essay. (*Carol*)

Beth's response to the first question included a long section dealing with feedback and a section dealing with what she referred to as 'academic literacies'. Parts of these sections are included in the extract below:

Um, ok. Um, well I mean - I think there are different approaches in . . . our school, um but certainly, in terms of the English language preparation around undergrad study, I think there's probably still a strong emphasis on building up students' expertise and um starting with, you know, smaller pieces of writing and then building up to paragraph and building up to essay. We really believe that it's important to give students feedback and then we believe in one-to one feedback too, if we can. . . . The other thing that is probably important to know too, is that in our English language department we also teach what we call academic literacies. . . . and that's where we teach really um the language um that's required in different, not just the language, the language and, English language and academic skills really, required in other discipline areas. . . .

The interviewer provided the following prompt: *So in relation to the previous question, I think you partly answered it, but what sort of things do you think your teachers generally teach in writing courses?*

Um, I think they teach about, I think they teach a bit of a genre, have a bit of a genre-based approach so they look at the requirements, for example, of an essay and a particular discipline and what are the features of that and then they look at models, um they also, I think there is some grammar teaching that goes on but I don't think that that's as strong a focus as it has been in the past. Um, there is quite a lot of emphasis on um, yeah, on vocabulary, being able to use the appropriate vocabulary, you know, the, in terms of register and etc. Um what else? Uh I have to dig deep into my memory to think what else they do. I mean I can show you some

curriculum documents, I can get some curriculum documents. I mean you should be speaking to the programme leaders; they've got more knowledge than I have. (*Beth*)

Dawn's response to the first question is printed below, followed by her response to the second one (i.e. what she thinks the teachers in her institution generally include):

Well with the lower levels, we're trying to use the language, the target language that they've done so they're focusing on present simple and then the essay is going to be in the present simple. If they've done something to do with past simple, plus also related to their - the topics that they have been studying in the book. That's more say at levels 1 to 3. At level 4, we're looking at different essay types, problem solution, cause effect, compare contrast. So we are looking at the language and because the book limits us in the topics we then choose general topics, ok? At level 5 it is then closely related to the book and perhaps more academic or like an IELTS Task 2. By level 6 and 7 of course, then it's into the research as far as the writing goes. So there's summarizing, paraphrasing, writing bibliographies as tests to support the actual research writing. (*Dawn*)

Well it's going to be the grammar, the structure of the essay, so our writing is very guided at the lower levels, ok? So we're trying to teach them to really just group ideas and paragraphs so they are given paragraph headings, right, that's it, say one, two. By level 3 we are introducing topic sentences, so the idea of supporting evidence to go with that. Similarly in level 4 and then of course through, yeah. (*Dawn*)

Eve began by noting that she hadn't been in the classroom for two years so was "getting rusty". She then went on to say that a writing course would include "genre and . . . the elements of discourse and . . . coherence and cohesion and vocabulary development and . . . APA referencing, . . . editing - all, a whole range of different things", adding that she felt sure she'd "left bits out where the

writing tutors would jump on [her]”. In response to the question about what she thought the teachers included, she said:

They teach those sorts of things, yeah, definitely, and they work as a team. So the planning is done as a team. They have a curriculum document. They have a syllabus developed and they, they meet weekly and make sure that they're covering what they need to cover to make sure the learning outcomes are achieved. (*Eve*)

6.4.2.8 Course integration: Skills-specific courses as an example

Two of the questions focused on skills-specific courses. The first asked whether, *if skills specific courses were offered, different skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year were taught by the same person or by different people.*

Extracts from the responses are provided below:

Different people. . . So, they'll have two teachers but those two teachers will stay with them for 10 weeks. (*Ann*)

Well . . . we tend to have - people tend to kind of specialise or have an interest in a particular area. . . . [W]e want to - people to do what they feel their strengths are and what they enjoy, um but then on the other hand sometimes timetabling can mean that people who were perhaps focusing on oral might need to do reading and vocabulary development. So, we expect our lecturers in the English language area to be fairly versatile . . . (*Beth*)

Oh they can be either. They can be taught by the same person or by different people. We always try to have someone who has done it before. . . . (*Carol*)

In the afternoon programme they are. . . . So it might be one, it could be two teachers, just depends. . . . (*Dawn*)

Yes, no we have, we have people who specialise in their particular area, so a tutor will be a listening and speaking tutor, or a reading and writing tutor. But at the same time, if you're teaching long-term, you need a bit of variety in your teaching life too So as long as the person has the skills and the ability to do that . . . (*Eve*)

Interviewees were also asked whether they believed that skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year should be closely linked.

Extracts from the responses are provided below:

So, teaching discreet skills rather than integrated? I think you can't wholly separate the skills. . . . So, I think they always have to be integrated to some degree but the main focus may be one skill erm and I think it depends if you link things thematically. It's better to have the same teacher because they can keep a theme rolling between the skills. Having said that, the only reason I see an advantage to having courses taught as discrete skills is that generally there are certain language groups who excel in one skill area more than in others. . . . (*Ann*)

Oh yes, oh I, oh well I think that it's and that's why we do it – because the language and the skills are then reinforced. If you have um, I mean what we try to do is to have topics that are relevant to the students so there's a context, you know, and then, you know, in oral and in writing and in reading it would be reinforced, um so no, not so tight yeah, yes. (*Beth*)

I think there definitely needs to be collaboration between teachers, absolutely, yes. (*Carol*)

Well the skills we offer would be reading and writing, reading and writing and grammar as one option; another one would be listening, speaking, pronunciation. No, there is no linking between the two, no. (*Dawn*)

Absolutely, definitely closely linked. So you're reciting the vocab and so on, so you're building. And also, you can't completely distinguish listening/speaking from reading/writing. There are always going to be crossovers so, you know, things like there will be incidental grammar teaching in listening/speaking and so on. You can't completely separate those 'cos language crosses across all those things so, even though somebody might be focused on reading and writing, there will be times when they'll, you know - It's a bit of an artificial distinction we make but from the point of view of having to teach specific learning outcomes it works well that way, but there will always be a crossover and they have, absolutely have to work in sync. So for example, if they, say they're doing, um writing an essay on acculturation, the listening/speaking tutor will also be using that same topic and doing listening/speaking activities based – using the same vocabulary and so on, same concepts, same ideas, yeah.
(*Eve*)

6.4.2.9 Proficiency-based and language-specific outcomes focused courses

Two of the questions related to *whether the interviewees thought that there were any differences between proficiency-based courses and courses that focus on outcomes that are language-specific*. The questions were as follows:

Is there, in your opinion, any difference between a proficiency-based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are language-specific (e.g. the students will be able to use the past perfect for events further back in the past than other events)? If so, what do you think are the main differences between them?

Extracts from the responses, interspersed with interviewer comments/questions, are printed below, starting with **Ann**'s response:

I think – so, a proficiency, like a Cambridge kind of exam based?
(*Interviewer: Brief explanation, making reference to IELTS and TOEFL as examples of proficiency tests*)

In the General English programme, because . . . it's a rolling intake - they - when a student leaves, they - their report has 'can do' statements so 'students can do de ded de da' – because they are constantly taking in new people and leaving. The academic programme, each course is 10 weeks, students must start and finish at the same time. . . . and we're relatively tied to the IELTS bands. The programme is not an IELTS-based programme at all but we try to be very careful with our assessments and make sure that we are in line with – and most of our students take the IELTS exam and so it's quite good for us. We can see what they got on their IELTS and we can see how they're doing in our programme. So, we're, we, you know, because the skills we do in our academic programme are totally different from what they do in IELTS, but there is certainly a level equivalency and generally we're pretty spot on with that. So, as I say, people exiting at Module 4 will either exit at an IELTS 6 or higher, depending on their grade.

(Interviewer: So, can I just ask you then to round off. What do you think then are the main differences between proficiency-based and the language-specific courses?)

I don't think there is a huge difference really. I think you have to have a certain language to have the proficiency so I think they're intertwined. In Academic English in the higher levels we focus on – non the skills rather than the language but - because there is an assumption that you have to have a certain amount of language to be able to acquire the skills. And I think once students reach, say, their intermediate level, they've studied all the language they are ever going to study. It's just whether they can produce and use it appropriately, and that seems to be the biggest stumbling block. **(Ann)**

So when you say proficiency-based, what are you meaning there?

(Interviewer: Brief explanation, making reference to IELTS and TOEFL as examples of proficiency tests)

Oh, ok, right. Um – well we certainly don't prepare our students for, um, just specifically for IELTS or TOEFL, because we see that as being very

limiting actually. Because, um it's just an – those are just – indicates of proficiency at a point in time. They don't um. Preparation for that doesn't help students to be able to study successfully at undergraduate level. It's very limiting so, no. We, we, which, - we have a very strong focus on being able to prepare students to be able to undertake successful study at undergraduate level and that's not just in terms of um, you know, the language proficiency required, the level of language required, but also in terms of being able to um use the institution's outline. So online, comfortable with online, study skills, time management all those kind of things as well. So that's kind of – Does that help? (*Beth*)

Ah yeah. I think there is.

(Interviewer: and if so what do you think is the difference?)

Ah yes, there is a very big difference. So IELTS is a proficiency test and so you're basically teaching the skills to do that test um and also I think a lot of the academic programmes are like that as well so: *Can you listen to this lecture and can you take notes?* Yeah um - that's why our – generally English courses are quite loose because they might already have seen the present perfect a million times but they can't actually – They know it, but they can't actually use it so it's more sort of skills-based. (*Carol*)

Which we do have? And then – Sorry, what was the –

(Interviewer repeats question)

Well it should be a combination of both though. Oh I would think so. Yeah, I would think you're sort of expecting a certain amount of proficiency, yeah, as well as, I mean using that language if it's language-based. I mean there has to be proficiency in it, yeah. (*Dawn*)

Sorry, can you just be specific. So when you talk about proficiency, do you mean something like an IELTS-type test? Is that what you're meaning?

(Interviewer: Well, an IELTS-based course could be an example of a proficiency-based course. So is there, in your opinion, any difference

between a proficiency- based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are language- specific?)

I think, um, there can be differences in the way people approach the delivery and the teaching, but any programme should be – the teaching should be tailored to the learning outcomes. It's the learning outcomes that determine the content. So we want, where they are at the pre-test, at the placement test and then where you want them to be at the end, what learning outcomes you want them to achieve, has to drive the content and between. So there shouldn't, in essence, be a difference, I don't think, but I do think for example the IELTS course, there tends to be more of a focus on – it's more test-driven. So, test strategies and things like that, rather than, oh, it can be, rather than focus on language outcomes. But I think we're aware of that and we watch out for that. (*Eve*)

6.4.2.10 Assessment

Continuing the theme of proficiency, *interviewees were asked whether there were any courses offered by their institution that they would be happy to see assessed by a proficiency test (such as IELTS) rather than an internal exam and, if so, which type of courses they were.*

One of the interviewees (*Carol*) answered these questions indirectly as follows:

Okay, so the academic courses . . . we actually say . . . we say that Module F - We have a Foundation Certificate in English, which is equivalent to an IELTS course, so if they get an A it's equivalent to an IELTS 7, if they get a B it's a 6.5 and if they get a C it's a 6, and we're constantly trying to make sure that our course is actually aligned with IELTS because that's the entry requirement for university. (*Carol*)

The other interviewees all responded to the first question in the negative, the reasons given being indicated below:

It is quite, it is difficult to equate our programme with IELTS in that our skills are completely different, particularly listening more than anything

because we focus on listening to lectures . . . and note-taking and answering comprehension from that and IELTS is completely different from that. (*Ann*)

No, not really. No, no. I mean I have every confidence in the . . . reliability . . . and the rigor of our testing processes. Our lecturers are very experienced: some of them are IELTS examiners. They teach in other graduate areas as well so we've got that to and fro. No, I don't think we need to. (*Beth*)

Well our tests are sort of a mixture of proficiency plus, like... Yeah, no I, no because they are sort of one-off type things and I think we're testing throughout our course things that are useful for students to build on to go to university. (*Dawn*)

No, probably not. It might be useful from the point of view of interest, but um I don't know if it would be a, a valid, um exercise to put the students through. It might be of interest to us and from the point of view for your research it might be interesting, but I don't know how we'd justify that with the students. I don't think that would meet their needs. (*Eve*)

Ann also made the following observations, observations that indicate that she might actually be in favour of using a proficiency test in the case of the general English programmes on some occasions:

There is, there is a certain amount of pressure on the academic programme to maintain our standards in line with IELTS in that we don't become more difficult than IELTS . . . and some students actually perceive it that way already, and some students perceive it the other way, that the course has been easier than IELTS. A lot of the Arab students perceive it that way 'cos they tend not to do particularly well on IELTS, because IELTS is so rigid about spelling for the listening exam and they [Arab students] tend not to be the best spellers. . . . We used to . . . have more IELTS materials

and IELTS-type assessments in academic and we've really moved away from that. And I'm quite glad. I'm not a huge fan of IELTS in that I just don't think it's a fair representation of a student's ability other than whether they're good at taking the IELTS exam or not. So, I try not to . . . [W]ith General English, they . . . probably do need more of that because they can have students in General English up to a year - and then that student leaves here with a certificate from X saying they finished at the advanced level but that doesn't have - you know. If you went somewhere and presented that nobody would know what that means and they're actually looking at offering things and I do think for General English students that would be good because then they could walk away with something that . . . recognized, some meaning. With academic because our Foundation Certificate programme is recognized by the university, for those students who take it they do have some equivalence. (*Ann*)

Interviewees were also asked who is responsible for end of course tests/examinations and how the content is determined. An extract from Ann's response to the first of these questions is included below:

Right, this is a bit of a sore point here . . . In General English they have assessments every six weeks. . . . I don't know who actually wrote them. They were written before I started here. They've been tweaked I think a little bit along the way. . . . In Academic English we have been working very hard over the last two years to refine our assessments We have been working towards two versions of each level of each exam so that we alternate them from block to block Certain exams have been replaced because teachers really disagreed with some of the aspects tested. . . . Assessments is a real bone of contention among some of the academic teachers. . . . We don't allow teachers to see them in advance because . . . they teach to the test. . . . but we make it clear to the teachers what the question types will be. . . . It could be, you know, if it's a reading true-false, multiple choice, short answer, matching headings, vocabulary, whatever. . . . and we also make sure that . . . they've been exposed to it

at some point but we're not perfect and . . . we don't have a team of assessment writers whose job is designated to work on assessments. . . I suppose the biggest issue is that . . . although it is obviously best practice to pilot any new assessment before you use it, in this kind of environment, how do you pilot them? . . . There's been some bad feeling among some of the teachers that the assessments have not been fair. . . . If it's a new assessment and it has gone very badly then we do a statistical analysis and we look at them and if we find . . . a certain question has gone bad then we adjust the scores. That's not best practice either but you do the best On the other hand . . . we never get any complaints about assessments when students do fantastically well. . . . So tests are really a tricky point but I really feel we're getting closer and closer . . . and . . . once we've got the two versions all sorted . . . then we'll look at introducing another version. (*Ann*)

Carol responded as indicated in the following extract (which includes a section that was referred to earlier in a different context):

In the academic programme the academic team does it in conjunction with the Department of X. In the General English programme they are all written in-house and they're modified slightly as things go along . . . and we test um grammar and vocabulary and then the four skills. . . . [T]he content of the academic courses is determined by well like say Module 4 we know the end point where it's got to be and then so Module 3 it's kind of that step below and so that's – We have the end point in mind. So who determines for general English? They're taken from the Common European Framework um descriptors and they may not match entirely because they don't entirely like match with into elementary print and, but they kind of are taken from there so, 'students at upper and intermediate level should be able to write – or writing should be – They can write in an organized way. They can organize their writing. They can do this'. So that's the kind of thing and the descriptors are based on those as well, yeah. (*Carol*)

Beth's response and that of *Eve* are printed below:

Generally . . . it's the programme that has decided what the assessments are. . . . and they're set assessments. Changes can be made but it has to go through a process of discussion with the other lecturers and that particular team so we've got a team of lecturers. They do but it's not just one or two lecturers saying 'Oh I want to make a change here'. There is a process that needs to be gone through and the changes are discussed and it may be that the team, um, I mean yeah. Generally, what people want to do they can, but as I say there is a process for it. . . . We don't really have exams, we have assessments that students do. One of our programmes is competency-based, so students have assessments on the way and so there's no final exam actually for any of our English language courses. We, we're not great believers in final exams. (*Beth*)

During the courses it's the team [that decides]. They have formative assessments . . . and actually this year we're formalising those formative assessments so that instead of every teacher writing their own assessment, they are being written as a team and . . . they have to be moderated, pre-moderated and approved by the programme manager and they'll be put in a . . . new filing system. It's an electronic filing system that will have a bank of formative test . . . and the summative assessments are determined at the writing of the curriculum document and then the development of the syllabus which is the next stage after that, and those are determined by the whole team working together, but they have to be signed off by the programme manager and the programme committee and then those may not be tweaked. You know, you can't have different staff members tweaking the summative assessments. That is not ok. (*Eve*)

Included with a section of *Dawn*'s response is a question posed by the interviewer:

They are set. Ok, so . . . there are things that we're just updating all the time in relation to topics in the book. . . . The coordinators or the team leaders [update them]. . . . Well we have three reading tests so we do decide how many questions, types of questions . . . same for the listening test.

(Interviewer: So does that relate to the textbook that they are using?)

Yes. Well with the reading it's topics and language so if we're looking sort of at the readability statistics that would be at that level whatever we have worked out for level 3 then the reading would be at that level and just common question types. (*Dawn*)

6.4.2.11 Textbooks

Interviewees were asked whether the teachers in their institution used textbooks (Q 17) and, if so, how are they selected and by whom. Extracts from Ann's response and that of Carol are printed below:

Ok, the *General English textbooks* . . . probably chosen by X's predecessor, the previous academic manager, but teachers will sometimes come with new - . We have a business English course and teachers might come and say 'Ok, we've been using this textbook but can we look at something new?' We can get in some books . . . have a look at them and decide which one we think is more appropriate but because students don't buy the textbooks in General English . . . you can't afford to change books very often. . . . We recently changed an IELTS book. We had three different books at the higher levels because we had academic students using it and general English students, so we were using different books, but we decided in the end that really in an IELTS book students need to write in them and so we decided that students would now purchase the book and . . . everybody kind of put in their two cents about which one they thought was the best . . . and now all of those level of courses are all using the same book and they purchase it. So, that was kind of a collaborative decision. *For the academic*, because the booklets are produced in-house, there's really no discussion about that and if teachers

feel the need to supplement the materials, we ask them to give them to the project leaders because if they feel there is a gap in the book, then we want to fill that gap and put it in. We do have class sets for listenings because listenings are so difficult to come by, level-appropriate, academic listenings and so we looked at what was available on the market and – there’s not a huge amount, especially when you get to lower levels . . . when you are talking about pre-intermediate level of academic English, um there’s not a lot. So, we went with what was on the market and we have a class set of listenings for each level of academic that teachers can supplement with. Um, they like it, they don’t like it. . . . For the second class in academic, we did go with a course book . . . which we split over two courses and interspersed with task-based projects and it was selected by a group of teachers and the senior academic teacher at that time. A lot of teachers don’t like it. . . . I think they actually don’t really use it. They’re supposed to. The students don’t buy it. . . . If the students were paying for it then I would insist that the teachers use it. . . . I encourage them to use it . . . but you do have to adapt it and make it appropriate. . . . Teachers say ‘Can we change it?’ but it is an enormous investment from the school. . . . I mean I hear people complain about *Headway* all the time and . . . the people who wrote *Headway*, they’re making a lot of money around the world so they must be doing . . . something right. I think course book writing is a difficult job. (*Ann*)

The General English programme they, the core, they have a core class and then they have a second class. So the core class has got a textbook, so that will be something like *New Headway*, *Cutting Edge* or something which the teacher will use as a basis for their course but they could supplement as much as they, they can supplement as much as they like so as long as they teach the kind of main things. And then they have a choice of a topics-based course and those are all developed in-house. So topics-based as a skills-based course and the topics for one week might be, for example, sport and so there will be a reading, a writing, a listening and a speaking lesson in that week, all based around the topic of sport and the next week

might be movies and the next week might be health, music that kind of thing, So they are all written in-house. . . . Business course is based on a textbook, but the teacher adapts a lot and puts lots of tasks-based stuff into it. (*Carol*)

(Interviewer: *Now, with regard to the textbooks, how are they selected and by whom?*)

They're selected by – I think we have a range, like an Oxford one and there's . . . a Cambridge one and a Longman one. And there's no real reason. We don't say one is better than another, but it's just there's a different approach. And . . . the academic courses, all the material is written in-house. . . . because . . . there are no good – And . . . I went on a benchmarking trip to Australia earlier in the year, with looking at the other direct entry programmes. . . and they said the same. There is no – 'Cos I was trying to work out what materials they were using and how they compared with ours and they all write their own because there is no. . . good books . . . which is surprising. (*Carol*)

Beth's response emphasised teacher choice:

They do, but they don't, generally they don't, not all of them. I mean they could if they wanted to, but they are very focused on meeting the needs of their students and so they tend to use, um, have an eclectic approach where we, and I mean we have probably the biggest resource room in the country of textbooks and people um take what they feel is – stuff from here and stuff from there, to make a course for the students. . . . They select according to, you know, whatever it is that they are teaching that they feel the textbook or, you know, whether it's listening exercises or whether it's um, you know, reading or whatever. They would just depending on what they think is...um, yeah (*Beth*)

Dawn said that the teachers in her institution used textbooks and made the following comments concerning their selection:

Basically by me because we don't actually have an academic manager as such now – but that would be in consultation with teachers. If something new comes up we would look into purchasing that, which we have done, say at level, well level 5, we did change from *Quest* because we thought . . . it wasn't quite so good. Looked at other books. . . . Level 6, again the teachers who taught it – There was a new *Quest* book so we looked at that to decide: Do we keep that, do we change to something else? So basically that's what it is. (**Dawn**)

Eve indicated that there was “a base text for the General English classes” and that, in the case of advanced English classes, a range of textbooks was used, there being no “one particular base text” except in the case of writing where it is “*Oshima and Hogue*”. In response to the question about responsibility for textbook selection, she said:

We just recently bought some new textbooks and we have a group who . . . put them together. So we have a core group who will go off . . . and have a look at texts that they think look interesting and they bring them back and put them out for discussion amongst the team or amongst the staff meeting and people make a case for why they think a book is worthwhile and it's discussed with the team and if the others also agree then that will be purchased. And sometimes if somebody loves something and someone else doesn't then they might buy their own copy.

6.4.3 Other comments

Interviewees were asked whether there were any other comments they wished to make. **Dawn** indicated that she had nothing to add, **Ann** observed that she would be interested in seeing the research when it was finished, **Beth** observed that students being prepared for academic studies needed “to learn how to work in pairs and groups”, **Eve** observed that her institution has been working hard and that staff were “taking pride in improving what they [did] and being customer

focused”, recognising that “*looking after [their]students’ needs [was] paramount*” but also being “*pure . . . about what we do . . . as educationalists*”. **Carol** responded at length, the extract below providing an overview:

. . . we offer a range of programmes and so we have to be adaptable. I think the academic programme is quite firm in that we know where we are going. The General English programme . . . it’s a little bit like topsy. It’s kind of grown, but we’ve just tried to tighten it up in terms of writing and then the . . . groups that we’ve got. So, for example, now we’ve got a group from Hong Kong, from X university and . . . it’s kind of like a finishing six weeks on the end of their degree and so . . . the whole purpose is that they actually learn more about cultural interchanges and so they are integrated into classes. Then they have a choice of businesses or topics or IELTS or – And then they are actually doing a volunteer programme so they are going to hospitals and kindergartens and . . . helping out. . . . So . . . we’ve got . . . those kind of courses too and they . . . have quite specific. . . . purposes. Often those purposes are designed by the university that they’ve come from and the students are really just here to have a good time. . . . so often there is a mismatch between what the university sends them on and is expecting them to achieve and what they want to do, but that’s ok.

6.5 Discussion

The primary emphasis in the discussion that follows is on issues of direct relevance to syllabus design. For the purposes of the discussion, I refer to institutions by number: ***Institution 1*** (represented by **Ann** and **Carol**); ***Institution 2*** (represented by **Beth**); ***Institution 3*** (represented by **Dawn**); and ***Institution 4*** (represented by **Eve**). Wherever it is considered useful to do so, questionnaire responses and interview responses are discussed in combination and, where programme documentation was supplied by the interviewees, short extracts are provided as relevant.

6.5.1 Qualifications, expectations and in-service development

There was general agreement among the interviewees that teachers should have practical training. Thus, for example, four of them referred specifically to the CELTA and all of them indicated that they believed that all, or most, of the English language teaching staff in their institutions had undergone some form of assessed teaching practicum. However, although all of them also indicated that teaching staff had, or were working towards, Diploma and/or Master's degrees in the area of language teaching and learning, none expressed concern about the fact that these qualifications vary widely in terms of content. It is relevant to note here that Spada and Massey (1992, p. 24) observe that students in the department where they worked expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which they were being adequately prepared for the second language teaching profession, something that they believed "reflects a universal complaint often heard in teacher education programs – that they see no (or a very weak) relationship between the 'theoretical' instruction they receive . . . and the 'practical' realities of teaching". Furthermore, Waters (2002, p. 225) notes that "there appears to be strikingly little empirical research concerning the expertise of the teacher educator, both outside as well as within the language teaching field" and Wang (2007), reporting on an in-depth survey of pre- and in-service training of teachers of English in Taiwan, noted that all of the participants "claimed that critical issues were either omitted altogether or dealt with in a superficial way" (p. ii).

In this context, it is interesting to note that, when asked how they tried to ensure that their teachers were aware of important developments in language teaching, past and present, one of the interviewees observed that this was partly covered by the expectation that the teachers would have a postgraduate Diploma, and four of them referred to the general availability of in-service development opportunities, with one observing that library facilities helped keep the teachers up to date, another noting that this (awareness of important developments in language teaching and learning) would be an appropriate topic for an 'academic hour', and a third saying that "*[h]opefully that will come up through a lot of the PD sessions*".

There were many indications throughout the interviews of very different management styles. Thus, for example, the responses of the representatives of *Institution 1* appear to signal a top-down management style, whereas the responses of the representative of *Institution 2* appear to signal a more bottom-up approach. Thus, **Ann** and **Carol** observed that teachers were not allowed to see assessments in advance, referred to ‘performance management’ (which they appeared to associate with professional development), and outlined what appears to be a hierarchical chain of decision-making responsibility in relation to curriculum and syllabus. **Beth**, on the other hand, noted that although there were curriculum documents, there was also flexibility so far as the teaching staff were concerned, observed that it was the teachers who decided on assessments, textbooks and the content of courses (as they were the ones who knew what the requirements) and, in relation to writing courses, noted that the programme leaders had more knowledge than she did. The approach favoured in *Institution 3* (represented by **Dawn**) seems similar in some respects to that of the institution represented by **Beth** except that the overall structure and approach to decision-making appears to be more fluid (“[W]e don’t actually have an academic manager as such now”; “At the moment it [decision-making in relation to the content of courses] is me in consultation with . . . teachers and team leaders”). In the case of *Institution 4* (represented by **Eve**), the approach seems to be a combined top-down and bottom up one: with ‘experienced staff’ and managers making joint decisions about curriculum and syllabus content based on “what’s coming from the teachers and the team meetings” in the context of an established institution-wide decision-making structure.

All of the teachers were expected, depending on management style, to be able to interpret, contest, modify and/or create courses (in a context in which the overall philosophy and approach are not guided by national curricula). In view of the fact that the content of the training programmes available to/undertaken by the teachers is likely to vary considerably, it seems unlikely that managers’ expectations in relation to the interpretation, contestation, modification and/or creation of courses is matched in all cases by the ability of teachers to provide a coherent, theoretically-based and historically grounded rationale for their decision-making in this area. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that

although half of the teachers who completed the questionnaire reported in *Chapter 5* selected syllabus design as one of their in-service development preferences, and although, in most cases, those interviewed indicated that teachers had a say in the types of in-service development opportunities available to them, issues critical to decision-making in the area of syllabus design, issues of considerable complexity, appear not to be dealt with in any systematic way within the institutions represented by the interviewees. This is of particular interest in view of the fact that each of the institutions represented appears to approach issues relating to curriculum and syllabus in different ways (see 6.5.2 below).

6.5.2 Curriculum and syllabus

6.5.2.1 An overview of the documentation provided by the interviewees in relation to curriculum/ syllabus issues discussed in the interviews

6.5.2.1.1 Introduction and background to the documentation

Questionnaire participants were asked whether the institution in which they worked had *an overall curriculum* for the English courses it offered (showing, for example, the relationship between each of the courses in terms of level and specific content, and including reference to methodology and materials). Just under half of the participants in the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 5* indicated that it did not have one or that they did not know whether it had one or not, with fourteen (14/15%) adding comments indicating that the curriculum documents that *were* made available to them were inadequate, incomplete or unhelpful. So far as *institutional syllabus documents* are concerned, approximately 30% either did not respond to a question concerning their usefulness (10%) or indicated that they found them to be ‘not very useful’ or ‘not useful at all’ (19%), with ten of the twenty-four comments provided making reference to the lack of clarity of the syllabus documentation made available to them. Even so, the vast majority of the participants reported that they believed that it was important to have a syllabus for each of the courses they taught, while allowing for adaptation in response to students’ ability to cope. Overall, the data derived from the interviews, combined with the documentation provided by the interviewees (discussed below), suggests that the negative views expressed by

some of the questionnaire participants in relation to the availability and content of institution-based curriculum and syllabus documents may be justified in some cases. In connection with this, an overview of the programme documentation provided by the interviewees following the interviews is provided below. It should be noted that most of that documentation was referred to directly in the interviews and can therefore be related directly to some of the interviewees' responses. It should also be noted that the documentation relating to *Institution 1's General English[GE] courses* was described, when it was provided, as an 'overview' of the institution's GE programme. This may account for the fact that the GE programme representative for that institution observed at one point that there was no 'actual curriculum' for GE courses and that planning was 'very loose', with teachers deciding on the content of courses "*depend[ing] on the students and the class at the time*". Overall, although the documents whose content is outlined below would appear to be those that are generally consulted by staff, it should not necessarily be assumed that there are no other programme documents available for consultation.

6.5.2.1.2 The documentation

All of the interviewees described the programmes they offered in terms of 'levels', using labels such as 'intermediate' and 'advanced' in association with these levels (terms which were associated by one of the interviewees – Eve – with the CEFR in spite of the fact that labels such as these are avoided in the CEFR). Furthermore, all of the documents provided include such labels. However, although all of the interviewees claimed that there were level descriptors for each course offered, not all of the documents provided did actually include descriptors of the different courses in terms of overall proficiency levels.

A review of the documentation provided by interviewees representing the four different institutions⁷² reveals considerable differences in terms of **(a)** the overall approach to programme/course description, and **(b)** the level of detail considered appropriate. For a more detail concerning that documentation, see *Appendix 4: Overview of the programme documentation provided by the interviewees*.

⁷² *Institution 1* was represented by *Ann* and *Carol*; *Institution 2* was represented by *Beth*; *Institution 3* was represented by *Dawn*; and *Institution 4* was represented by *Eve*.

In terms of the definitions provided in *Chapter 2*, only one set of these documents (those relating to **Institution 4**) could be described as ‘curriculum documents’ in that they include material (of, however, a very general nature) under the heading of *philosophy* (e.g. “learning is a cumulative process”; progression is ‘spiral’), *approach* (e.g. the approach is ‘eclectic’, involving “communicative, task-based, genre based, and problem solving methodologies”) and *assessment* (said to be ‘competency-based’), as well as *achievement objectives* (some of which - referred to as ‘learning outcomes’ and expressed as ‘can do’ statements, bear some relation to the types of descriptor included in the CEFR but are more general as in the case of “understand simple spoken information and instructions”). However, although there are statements relating to *overall course aims*, these are not *proficiency-based descriptors*. Instead, they rely on readers’ understanding of terms such as ‘beginner’, supplemented by very general goal statements (e.g. “The goal . . . is to introduce students to a range of language resources to develop interpersonal communication skills and language proficiency in everyday social and general educational environments”: *Level 1*). The documentation provided that relates to the English programme offered by **Institution 2**, on the other hand, is almost entirely proficiency-based, with very few references to language specifics. Although it includes *achievement objectives*, referred to as ‘core competencies’ and ‘performance outcomes’ (e.g. “can demonstrate understanding of extended spoken information texts”) and *assessment criteria* (e.g. “uses vocabulary relevant to topic”), it does not include any references to *philosophy* or *approach*. The documentation relating to **Institution 1**’s EAP programme makes no reference to *philosophy*, *approach* or *assessment* and contains no *overall proficiency-based level descriptors* and no clearly articulated *achievement objectives*. Furthermore, there is little difference overall between the entries for *Levels 1* and *2* and those for *Levels 3* and *4*. In fact, **Modules 1** and **2** are the same in terms of *Reading* and *Vocabulary/Language*, the only differences between these modules being (a) the replacement of ‘paragraph’ in **Module 1** by ‘essay’ in **Module 2** (under *Speaking and Research*), (b) the replacement of ‘short talks and dialogues’ in **Module 1** by ‘short talks and lectures’ in **Module 2** (under *Listening*), the replacement of ‘from sentence to paragraph’ and reference to ‘short descriptive essays, topic, supporting

and concluding sentences' in **Module 1** by 'from paragraph to essay' and 'note taking techniques, various genres, including narrative, advantages/disadvantages, compare/contrast and summary writing' in **Module 2** (under *Writing*).

The documentation relating to **Institution 1**'s GE programme does, however, make reference to *assessment*, noting that students are tested every X weeks (the actual number is provided) and that these are 'proficiency tests' that "include grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing, listening and speaking components". It is also noted that "[s]tudents are required to be 80% proficient at their current level to pass to the next level" (a statement that is difficult to interpret in proficiency terms). It also includes what are referred to as 'writing descriptors' and 'speaking descriptors' which are expressed in very general, and, at the lower levels, largely negative terms (e.g. 'Learner struggles to communicate in English at all' (*Starter Level: Speaking*); "Communicates on familiar topics but has little range of grammar structures and vocabulary" (Pre-Intermediate: *Speaking*). There are, in addition, *achievement objectives* under three headings (*listening and speaking; reading; writing*) that are expressed as 'can-do' statements. Some of these 'can-do' statements bear some relationship to statements that appear in the CEFR although that relationship sometimes appears tenuous. Thus, for example, under 'writing' at A1, the CEFR refers to the ability to write "a short, simple postcard, for example, sending holiday greetings" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 26), whereas under 'writing' at 'elementary level', this document simply refers to the ability to "write a postcard".

The documentation provided that relates to **Institution 3** includes a short statement about *assessment* for each course. In each case, it is noted that assessment is 'criterion-referenced' and intended to indicate to "what degree the achievement objectives are met". It is also noted that assessment of writing tests is 'standards-based'. In the case of each course, reference is also made to a specific number of tests relating to each of the following: *listening, reading, speaking or presentation* and *writing*, and the types of writing test (e.g. 'process writing', 'product essay', 'research essay') are indicated. In addition, there are *proficiency-based descriptors* and *achievement objectives* (described as 'learning objectives') under the following headings: *writing, reading, listening, speaking, grammar (in*

writing and speaking) and *vocabulary*. The proficiency-based descriptors are described as ‘general outcome statements’. They provide for useful discrimination among courses at the higher levels but rely at lower levels (as do so many overall proficiency descriptors, such as those included in the CEFR and the other documents provided by the interviewees), on words such as ‘simple’, ‘limited’ and ‘partial’ which are open to a wide variety of interpretations (e.g. “By the end of this level the student will be able to understand and use English in a limited range of situations. The student will be able to recognise and use set phrases and simple vocabulary in everyday situations. The student will be able to read simple texts and write simple messages”: *Level 2*).

Only one of the sets of documentation (that relating to *Institution 3*) could be described, in the terms outlined in *Chapter 2*, as a ‘syllabus document’ in that it includes considerable detail relating to the content of the courses (grammar, vocabulary, etc.). Thus, for example, many of the achievement objectives included under the headings of *vocabulary* and *grammar in writing and speaking* are expressed in ways that signal expected linguistic content (e.g. *Discriminate between the uses of the past simple, past continuous and present perfect; Use vocabulary learned in class for the following everyday purposes: shopping, etc.*). So far as the other institutions are concerned, the documentation contains very little indication of the linguistic content of the courses offered, with the exception, in some instances, of vocabulary. Thus, for example, although reference is made in the documentation relating to the first module of *Institution 1*’s EAP courses to ‘cohesive devices’ and ‘academic vocabulary’, there is no indication of which cohesive devices and lexical items (or types of lexical item) will be in focus. In the case of the documentation relating to *Institution 1*’s GE courses, the *achievement objectives* (e.g. *Can identify simple cohesive devices*) are not accompanied by linguistic indicators. It is, however, relevant to note that it is observed in the document that “[c]lasses are *based on* a published course books carefully chosen to meet the needs of the students” (emphasis added), something that suggests that the detailed linguistic content of these courses is determined, to some extent at least, by the textbook writers. The documentation relating to *Institution 4*’s English courses includes recommended topics (e.g.

Entertainment/leisure: hobbies, interests, sports) and reference to vocabulary lists (e.g. “Basic vocabulary from the first 500 general word list”: *Level 1*) but provides no other linguistic specification. The table below provides a general overview of the content of the documentation.

Table 6.1: *Institutions 1-4 – General overview of English programme documentation*

	Philosophy	Approach	Assessment	Overall proficiency descriptors	Can do' achievement objectives	Some functional specification	Some detailed lexical specification	Some detailed grammatical specification	Some detailed discourse specification
<i>Institution 1 – GE programme</i>			√	√ (For writing and speaking)	√	√			
<i>Institution 1 – EAP programme</i>									
<i>Institution 2 – English programme</i>			√	√	√	√			
<i>Institution 3 – English programme</i>			√	√	√	√	√	√	
<i>Institution 4 – English programme</i>	√	√	√		√	√			

As indicated above, the programme documentation supplied by the interviewees indicates that approaches to English programme specification vary widely among institutions and even, when referring to different English programmes (e.g. **GE** and **EAP**) within the same institution. Although all except one set of documentation provided includes achievement objectives, they are often expressed in very general terms and by no means always associated with linguistic indicators.

6.5.2.2 Achievement objectives/course outcomes

Asked whether they could provide a list of specific outcomes for each of their courses if asked to do so, 73 (78%) of the participants in the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 5* indicated that they could. However, only 62 (67%) attempted to provide examples, with the majority of these examples either lacking language indicators altogether or being too general to be related in any useful way to assessment. Very few were clearly indicative of what the students were expected to be able to do using the target language on completion of the course.

Interviewee responses to a number of questions suggest that at least some of the institutional managers/programme co-ordinators involved may be equally uncertain about course outcome specification. Asked whether their institutional curricula included a list of objectives/ outcomes/‘can-do’ statements and whether, if so, an example could be provided, the representative of *Institution 3* said that no such list was available and the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1* said that no such list was available for the **EAP** courses offered by her institution. The others indicated that there was such a list for each of the courses offered (*Institutions 2* and *4*) or that there was such a list for the **GE** courses offered (*Institution 1*). None of the interviewees provided an example. In fact, all but one of the sets of documentation supplied (i.e. the documentation relating to *Institution 1*’s **EAP** programme) *do* include achievement objectives in the form of ‘can-do’ statements. However, these statements vary considerably in terms of content-type and degree of specificity.

In the case of *Institution 4* and *Institution 1* (**GE**), the achievement objectives included in the documentation supplied appear to relate, to some extent at least, to the types of descriptor included in the *CEFR*. They are, however, often less specific. Thus, for example, under ‘writing’ at A1, the *CEFR* refers to the ability to write “a short, simple postcard, for example, sending holiday greetings” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 26), whereas under ‘writing’ at ‘elementary level’, the documentation relating to *Institution 1*’s **GE** programme simply refers to the ability to “write a postcard”. It is important to note, however, that the representative of this institution indicated that more specific course documentation, documentation that would outline syllabus content in more specific terms, including grammatical specification, was yet to be prepared. In common with many of the descriptors included in the *CEFR*, these achievement objectives outlined in this documentation often appear to rely heavily on words (e.g. ‘simple’ and ‘longer’) that are open to a variety of interpretations and that, therefore, cannot be related to assessment in any direct way.

The specifications included in the documentation relating to **Institution 2** are based on the 1995 version⁷³ of the *Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR): General Proficiency Version for English* (Wylie and Ingram, 1995) - adapted and abridged - except in the case of the categories relating to speaking – which are said to be taken from the *Occupational English Test for Health Professionals* (McNamara, 1988), an overview of which is included in *Appendix 6: Overview of ISLPR Scale*. The documentation includes what are referred to as ‘core competencies’ and ‘performance outcomes’, both being similar to CEFR-style descriptors and the latter being intended to be related directly to assessment. As in the case of the achievement objectives associated with the documentation relating to **Institution 1** (GE programme) and **Institution 4**, both the core competencies and the performance outcomes are often very general (e.g. *Can talk about self*: English Intermediate – Core competency) and/or open to a wide range of possible interpretations (e.g. *Able to write a short discursive essay*). They are associated with a range of ‘assessment criteria (e.g. *paragraphing is secure; more complex grammatical forms attempted with some accuracy*).

The achievement objectives included in the documentation relating to **Institution 3** appear to be less evidently related to the types of descriptor included in the *CEFR* or *ASLPR*, often including, for example, direct reference to language specifics (e.g. *Express future intentions using ‘going to’*) and thus providing, overall, for the integration of communicative outcomes and their linguistic realization. However, although these achievement objectives (associated with **Institution 3**) often provide for useful discrimination among courses at the higher levels, they sometimes rely at lower levels (as do so many overall proficiency descriptors, such as those included in the *CEFR* and the other documents provided by the interviewees), on words such as ‘simple’, ‘limited’ and ‘partial’ which are open to a wide variety of interpretations (e.g. “By the end of this level the student will be able to understand and use English in a limited range of situations. The student will be able to recognise and use set phrases and simple vocabulary in

⁷³ It is noted in the documentation that earlier versions of the ASLPR were also consulted.

everyday situations. The student will be able to read simple texts and write simple messages”: *Level 2*).

It was noted at the beginning of this section that none of the interviewees was able to provide, from memory, an example of an achievement outcome associated with one of their institution’s courses. It was also noted that the examples of ‘specific course outcomes’ supplied by questionnaire participants (see *Chapter 5*) were often not clearly indicative of what the students were expected to be able to do using the target language on completion of the course, either because they lacked language indicators altogether or because they were too general to be related in any useful way to assessment. Furthermore, although all except one set of programme documentation supplied by the interviewees includes achievement objectives in the form of ‘can-do’ statements, these objectives (even in the case of the ‘performance outcomes’ included in *Institution 2*’s documentation), were often unaccompanied by linguistic indicators even, on occasion, in the case of the *Institution 3*’s documentation.

None of the interviewees raised any issues relating to (a) the possibility of expressing achievement objectives in different ways, including or omitting expected linguistic realizations, (b) the difficulty of avoiding the use of words and expressions that are open to a range of different interpretations, or (c) potential difficulties associated with attempting to relate achievement objectives and assessment in any direct way in the absence of linguistic specification. Each of these issues is, however, of considerable importance and inevitably impacts on teachers and students. What all of this appears to indicate is that the impact of the *CEFR*’s attempt to specify achievement objectives in the form of communicative outcomes that are equally relevant to a wide range of languages continues to be profound, whereas attempts to relate objectives to language specifics in the form of *reference level descriptions* (RLDs) has thus far had considerably less impact.

6.5.2.3 Course content

Of the seventy nine (79) questionnaire participants who expressed a preference (see *Chapter 5*), an almost equal number indicated that they preferred (40) or preferred not (39) to focus at beginner and elementary level on words and

sentences rather than on larger stretches of language. Questionnaire participants were also asked which of a list of content types they would include at different levels in core language development courses. In response, a majority indicated that they would include *vocabulary, language structures, tasks* and *activities* at all levels⁷⁴. In addition, they were asked whether they would include ellipsis and substitution in courses at different levels⁷⁵ and which of a number of semantic relations and semantic relational encodings⁷⁶ and genres⁷⁷ they would include at different levels. The figures for each category are provided in *Footnotes 179-182*.

Interviewees were asked what the main focus of the majority of courses taught in their institution was, while being provided with examples of possible content (grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills, learning skills, or some combination

⁷⁴ The figures for each item are as outlined below:

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Vocabulary	97%	95%	90%	83%
Language Structures	78.5%	95%	91%	81%
Tasks	76%	84%	93.5%	93.5%
Activities	93.5%	93.5%	93.5%	87%
Learning strategies	50.5%	74%	83%	81%
Cohesive devices (e.g. <i>because</i>)	35.5%	77%	89%	77%
Types of link between clauses and sentences (e.g. comparison, contrast, example)	13%	43%	92.5%	90%

⁷⁵ The figures are as indicated below:

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Ellipsis	3%	24%	57%	31%
Substitution	4%	31%	57%	22%

⁷⁶ The figures are as indicated below:

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Comparing and contrasting	25%	58%	32%	16%
Concession	0%	21%	75%	26%
Purpose	9%	45%	54%	16%
Reasons signalled by 'because'	26%	69%	28%	11%
Reasons signalled by 'because of'	2%	29%	67%	20%
Reasons signalled by 'so'	11%	58%	42%	12%
Results signalled by 'therefore'	1%	20%	71%	25%
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled	19%	21.5%	42%	28%
A combination of reasons and conditions	0%	4%	69%	37%
Choices	56%	54%	12%	9%
Temporal sequence	25%	58%	33%	11%

⁷⁷ The figures are as indicated below:

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Recount	52%	64%	48%	46%
Narrative	41%	64.5%	63%	43%
Instruction	41%	50%	57%	42%
Argument	1%	13%	58%	71%
Report	6.5%	2%	62%	73%
Explanation	4%	35.5%	74%	61%
Description	45%	68%	62%	48%

of these). None commented on omissions from the list of examples. All except one (the **GE** representative of *Institution 1*), who indicated that the main focus was language skills, said that each of the areas listed was equally important. It is relevant to note here, however, that the documentation relating to the institution whose representative said that the main focus was on language skills refers specifically to a focus on “grammatical form and accuracy” under the heading of *writing* in the case of *Modules 1* and *2*.

When describing the courses offered, some of the interviewees made comments on the content of **GE** and **EAP** courses in their institutions. These comments are summarised below:

Institution 1 (GE): primary skills focus, but courses include textbook-based core language development lessons.

Institution 1 (EAP) and Institutions 2, 3 & 4: grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills, learning skills all equally important BUT:

- *Institution 1 (EAP)*: once students reach intermediate level “they’ve studied all the language they are ever going to study”;
- *Institution 2*: focus on vocabulary development, micro-skills and reading, writing, listening, and speaking at intermediate to advanced levels;
- *Institution 3*: focus on grammar (Elementary and Pre-Intermediate); focus on skills (Intermediate – Advanced);
- *Institution 4*: focus on subject/discipline-related vocabulary and topics at top three levels of EAP programme.

It is relevant here to consider questionnaire data, interview responses and the content of the programme documentation provided by the interviewees.

So far as *language structures* and *vocabulary* are concerned, most of the interviewees indicated that they would include them at all levels. However, although all but one of the interviewees (the EAP representative of *Institution 1*)

said that they considered grammar and vocabulary to be important aspects of the content of their language programmes, when outlining the main focus of various components of these programmes, the representatives of *Institutions 2* and *4* referred to vocabulary, but only the representative of *Institution 3* referred to grammar (noting that it was a primary focus at elementary and pre-intermediate levels). Furthermore, only the documentation provided that relates to *Institution 3* provides some detailed grammatical and lexical specifications (although the inclusion of recommended topics along with references to specific word lists in the case of the documentation relating to *Institution 4* provides some basis for lexical selection). In the case of *Institution 4*'s **GE** programme, the indication is (see discussion above and following) that grammatical and lexical selection is determined by the choice of textbooks.

So far as *language skills* are concerned, all of the interviewees considered them to be an important aspect of the content of their language programmes, with the EAP representative of *Institution 1* stressing that she considered them to be the primary focus of her institution's **EAP** programme. However, although all of the programme documentation provided by the interviewees makes reference to *reading, writing, listening* and *speaking*, and all of it includes some language skills indicators, these skills indicators are very general in nature in most cases (see examples below):

***Institution 1 GE:** Can identify simple cohesive devices; Can deduce meaning from context (at a simple level);*

***Institution 1 EAP:** Listening for gist, main idea and detail.*

***Institution 2:** Can scan (e.g. list, timetables, programmes, the telephone directory) and isolate information required (e.g. a name, a time, a phone number)).*

***Institution 3:** Deduce word meaning from context in reading material similar to course content.*

***Institution 4:** Understand a variety of oral texts to extract main ideas, details and meaning from context.*

All of the interviewees and most of the questionnaire respondents considered *learning skills/strategies* to be an important aspect of the content of language courses (with between 81% and 83% indicating that they included them in their intermediate and advanced courses). However, in the documentation provided by the interviewees, references to learning skills were either absent altogether or were very general in nature (see examples below):

Institution 1 GE: “strategies to cope with unknown vocabulary”

Institution 4: “*apply active oral communication strategies* to provide and obtain information . . .”

Of the seventy nine (79) questionnaire participants who expressed a preference (see *Chapter 5*), an almost equal number indicated that they preferred (40) or preferred not (39) to focus at beginner and elementary level on words and sentences, rather than on larger stretches of language. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that **(a)** although all except the representative of ***Institution 1***'s EAP programme considered all of the content areas listed to be equally important, only the representative of ***Institution 3*** included grammar when discussing aspects of programme content elsewhere, and **(b)** only the documentation provided by the representative of ***Institution 3*** includes a clear indication of the grammatical expectations associated with each level. Even in the case of that documentation, there is little clear indication of the discourse features intended to be associated with particular levels.

A majority of questionnaire respondents indicated that they would include *tasks* and *activities* at all levels in their language programmes and all of the interviewees considered tasks to be an important component of their language courses. However, although the programme documentation relating to ***Institution 2*** includes reference to assessment tasks, none of the programme documentation includes any detail about the types of task in which learners are expected to engage during the learning process. Furthermore, although the representative of ***Institution 1***'s EAP programme referred on several occasions to the importance of

tasks, the documentation relating to that programme makes little reference to tasks.

Questionnaire participants were asked whether they would include ellipsis and substitution in courses at different levels. Although over half of the respondents indicated that they would include both at intermediate level, none of the programme documentation provided by the *interviewees* makes any reference to ellipsis or substitution.

Questionnaire participants were also asked which of a number of *semantic relations* and *semantic relational encodings* they would include in their courses at different levels, with over half signalling that they would include *comparison*, *contrast*, *purpose*, *reason* (signalled in a number of different ways), *concession* and *temporal sequence* at either intermediate or advanced levels or both. However, other than in very general terms in *Institution 2's* documentation relating to Academic English (e.g. “demonstrates understanding of the relationships between items of information in the text e.g. causal, additive, concessive”), *the documentation provided by the interviewees* makes no reference to semantic relations.

Another question asked questionnaire participants whether they would include *cohesive devices* in courses at different levels, with 35.5% indicating that they would do so at beginner level, 77% that they would do so at intermediate and advanced levels and 89% that they would do so at intermediate level. In spite of this, none of the programme documentation provided by the interviewees provides any detailed specifications relating to cohesion. There are, however, some very general references to ‘cohesive devices’ throughout the documentation relating to *Institutions 1* and *2* and in the later stages of the documentation relating to *Institutions 3* and *4*.

So far as *genre* is concerned, over 40% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they would include *recount*, *narrative* and *instruction* at all levels of language programmes and well over 50% that they would include *argument* at intermediate

and advanced levels. Although there are some references to text types (e.g. letters, essays) in all of the programme documentation provided by the interviewees, there are very few references to specific genres. The documentation relating to *Institution 1*'s EAP programme refers to "various genres" in *Module 2* and "a variety of academic genres, including process, problem and solution, and cause and effect" in *Modules 3 & 4* (a description which appears to signal some categorical confusion). Similarly, the documentation relating to *Institution 1*'s GE programme refers generally to 'genre-appropriate text' (Upper Intermediate), making only one reference to a specific genre (i.e. 'simple narrative': Pre-intermediate level). *Institution 2*'s documentation, however, refers to *narrative* at elementary level and to *narrative, recount, report* and *instruction* at intermediate level. As in the case of *Institution 1*'s documentation, there seems to be some categorical confusion, with one text type (the essay) dominating at the higher levels and with the adjectives used to describe that text type (e.g. 'opinion essay'; 'expository essay') appearing to be used in place of more specific references to genres. In the documentation relating to *Institution 3*, there are no specific references to genre and, with the exception of a reference to a 'research report' and references to 'short stories', only one text-type (the essay) features. Once again, there may be some categorical confusion, with, for example references to writing "advantages and disadvantages essays", "cause/effect/solution essays" and "expanded definition essays". What appears to be happening here is that general semantic relational categories (e.g. cause/effect) or terms indicative of them (e.g. advantages and disadvantages) are being used to signal a genre (e.g. argument) indirectly. In the documentation relating to *Institution 4*, there is a combination of very general references to genre (e.g. "models of genres and text types" at *Level 5*) and inclusive lists (e.g. "narrative, reports, argumentative" (*Level 5*)), with a more specific reference to analysing arguments and writing research reports at *Level 5*.

Asked what sort of things they thought should be included in a writing course, the interviewees focused on the programmes offered by their own institutions. One referred to 'process', appearing to suggest that writing in the early stages in her institution was process-based (the EAP representative of *Institution 1*), another

referred to register (*Institution 2*) and both of these interviewees referred to coherence, cohesion and genre. However, very little reference was made to specific genres, with those who made any reference at all to genre doing so in a very general sense and appearing to associate genre only with different types of essay (*Institution 2*) or to make no distinction between genre and other types of categorization, such as semantic relations (EAP representative of *Institution 1*)⁷⁸. Some of these things (e.g. the lack of any detailed reference to specific genres and the lack of useful categorical differentiation) were also found to be characteristic of the programme documentation supplied by the interviewees.

Four of the interviewees made a distinction between lower level and higher level writing courses. One observed that there was an initial focus on “*grammatical accuracy*”, a later focus on “*all the genres*” and a final focus on “*summary writing and paraphrasing*” (EAP representative of *Institution 1*). Another noted that

⁷⁸ One of the representatives of *Institution 1* said that there was a curriculum for GE courses based on the European Framework and including ‘can-do’ statements (such as, at elementary level, filling in a form or writing a simple letter) and that the focus was on ‘core skills’ but that teachers tended to focus on different things, giving as an example the fact that a teacher with ‘a business bias’ might teach how to write a letter of complaint. Referring to EAP courses, she said that the focus moved through paragraph writing (Module 1), summary writing and writing a simple, structured essay (Module 2) to paraphrasing and writing different kinds of essay such, as ‘problem-solution and compare and contrast’. She also observed that the focus was on ‘what they’re needing to do at the university’ referring as an example to ‘writ[ing] a research essay’ and being able to summarize, paraphrase and prepare annotated bibliographies’. The other representative of *Institution 1* observed that four categories were used in assessing writing (task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical range and accuracy, and grammatical range and accuracy), indicating that these categories were indicative of content. She added that as students moved through levels the focus moved from (a) grammatical accuracy and sentence structure through (b) paragraph structuring and cohesive devices and (c) simple three paragraph essays to (d) longer essays and ‘looking at all the genres’ (“start[ing] with descriptive essays, narrative, compare and contrast, advantages and disadvantages, process, discursive and finally argumentative at the highest level”) and, finally, (e) summary writing and paraphrasing. She added that at the higher levels there would also be a focus on “exploiting vocabulary and a range of structures”. *Institution 2*’s representative referred to a move from smaller pieces of writing through paragraph building to essay writing, adding that in teaching what she referred to as ‘academic literacies’, her institution focused on the language and academic skills required in different subject areas. She also indicated that she thought the teachers placed a lot of emphasis on vocabulary, included some grammar teaching, looked at ‘models’ and ‘probably taught a bit of genre’ (referring to essay requirements associated with particular disciplines). The representative of *Institution 3* said that at the lower levels (1-3), the focus was on using structures (such as present simple and past simple) in topic-related contexts, grouping ideas and paragraphs and using topic sentences with supporting evidence and that at higher levels there was a move from a focus on different essay types⁷⁸ (level 4), to a more academic focus⁷⁸ which was ‘closely related to the book’ (level 5) and on to research writing, including summarizing, paraphrasing and writing bibliographies (levels 6 and 7). *Institution 4*’s representative indicated that writing courses would include genre, the elements of discourse, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary development, editing and APA referencing.

there was a different focus in each of four modules – from “*writing a decent paragraph*” through “*writing a simple essay . . . and some summary writing*” to “*writing different kinds of essay like problem-solution, compare and contrast and paraphrasing*” and “*writ[ing] a 1500 word research essay*” (GE representative of **Institution 1**). Yet another said that there was ‘probably’ a movement through a focus on “*smaller pieces of writing*”, followed by “*paragraph[s]*” and “*essay[s]*” (**Institution 2**). Finally, one noted that the focus at lower levels was on “*the target language that they’ve done*”, moving towards a focus on “*different essay types, problem solution, cause effect, compare, contrast*” and, finally, “*research . . . summarizing, paraphrasing, writing bibliographies*” (**Institution 3**). What all of this suggests is that although most of the institutional managers and teachers involved in this research project appear to be attempting to take account of some recent developments in discourse analysis and, in particular, of some recent developments in genre-based writing instruction, there is considerable uncertainty and confusion about precisely what is involved.

6.5.2.4 Course integration

A number of questions in both the questionnaire and interviews were asked in order to determine whether participants believed that the courses taken by students should be related in a way that ensured that the overall programme provided to students was a coherent and integrated one.

Only just over half of the participants (50/54%) in the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 5* indicated that they believed that all of the English courses that a student takes in any particular year should be directly related to one another, with a further 42% indicating that they were unsure about this (10/11%) or that they should not (29/31%). However, almost all of them (82/88%) also indicated that they would try to take account (*either in whole* (41/44%) *or in part* (41/45%)) in teaching a reading (or writing) course of the content of any writing (or reading) course being taken by the same students at the same stage in their programme, often by using reading texts as models for writing texts. Even so, considerably fewer (an average of 55/59%) indicated that they would *actually* be aware (*either in whole* (an average of 40/43%) *or in part* (an average of 15/16%)) of the content

of a reading/writing course if they were teaching a writing/reading course involving the same students at the same stage in their programme.

The questions asked of interviewees that related to course integration referred specifically to skills-based courses. The first of these asked whether different skill-specific courses taught in their institution to the same group of students in the same year were taught by the same person or different people. In response, four of the interviewees indicated that the teachers were likely to be different in the case of different courses, with the other one indicating that the teacher could be the same one or a different one. However, in responding to a question asking whether they believed that skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year should be closely linked, all but one (*Institution 3*) indicated that they believed that they should be, with the linkage among courses being seen in terms of themes in one case (the EAP representative of *Institution 1*), topics in another (*Institution 2*), and a combination of topics, vocabulary, concepts and ideas in a third (*Institution 4*). Furthermore, one of the interviewees who had previously indicated that the teachers would be different ones made the following observation: *It's better to have the same teacher because they can keep a theme rolling between the skills* (the EAP representative of *Institution 1*).

So far at least as skills-based courses are concerned, both the managers/programme co-ordinators and the teachers involved in the research reported here appear, in general, to be in favour of ensuring that there are links between courses. This suggests that such linkage is likely to be signalled in curriculum documentation. However, as indicated earlier, almost half of the participants in the questionnaire-based survey reported that their institution either did not have an overall curriculum for the English courses it offered or that they did not know whether it had one or not, something that may explain the fact that so many of them reported that they would not *actually* be aware of the content of a reading/writing course being taken by the same students who were taking a writing/reading course that they were teaching. So far as the programme documentation supplied by the interviewees is concerned, course linkages are largely unsignalled. In the case of the course outlines relating to *Institution 1*,

there is no indication of any connection between different areas of the same overall programme (e.g. reading and writing). The situation so far as the course outlines relating to *Institutions 2* and *4* are concerned is very similar, although some general specifications refer, in each case, to all areas. Thus, for example, in the case of *Institution 2*, some general specifications (relating, for example, to accuracy of grammatical expression and overall communicative effectiveness) refer to all areas and in the case of *Institution 4*, some of the learning outcomes refer to all areas. In the case of *Institution 3*, writing and reading are linked through a single set of grammatical indicators that refer to both.

In general, it would appear that language programme documentation may provide much less indication of the intended linkages (if any) among different aspects of the same programme (e.g. different skill areas) than many teachers and programme managers would like.

6.5.2.5 Proficiency, proficiency-testing and the impact of the CEFR

One of the interviewees said that all of the programmes offered by her institution were directly linked to the CEFR (*Institution 4*); another that the writing component of the **GE** programme offered by her institution was linked to the CEFR (the **GE** representative of *Institution 1*), and a third that there was a link with the CEFR where “they’ve got criteria or descriptors or . . . rubrics”, adding that “we’ve actually made a curriculum[for writing courses] around the Common European Framework” that includes “some ‘can-do’ statements (*Institution 3*).

The expression of achievement objectives in terms of 'can do' statements is generally associated with the Council of Europe and the CEFR and also with proficiency-style descriptors more generally. While the representative of *Institution 2* claimed that achievement objectives were expressed in this way, she did not associate any of her institution’s programmes with the CEFR. On the other hand, while the representative of *Institution 3* claimed a link between her institution's programmes and the CEFR, she also claimed that 'can do' style achievement objectives were not included in her institution's programme documentation although, in fact, they actually were.

One of the interviewees said that the reason why her institution's programmes were linked to the CEFR was that there was a desire to be 'academically robust' and to be able to 'benchmark what we do' (*Institution 4*). She also appeared to suggest that reputable institutions in Australia and New Zealand linked their programmes to the CEFR ("... and also within NZ with reputable institutions in NZ and Australia, we want to be aligned with what is best practice"). In connection with this, and with the other CEFR linkages claimed, it is relevant to note that Valax (2011, pp. 164-257), with particular reference to language curricula designed in France and New Zealand, has demonstrated the extreme difficulty of relating course design to CEFR descriptors. He has also indicated that although the achievement objectives associated with the 'communication strand' of the 'learning languages' component of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education (New Zealand, 2007) is described as being made up of 'proficiency descriptors' and as being adapted from the CEFR's global scale, the relationship with the CEFR is actually a tenuous one (pp. 248-253). Furthermore, Elder and O'Loughlin (2007), who were commissioned to conduct a feasibility study in response to the Australian government's interest in introducing the CEFR in relation to the ELICOS industry⁷⁹, concluded that there was "no guarantee that any instantiation of the framework developed by one institution would be equivalent to other instantiations" and that "while the CEFR [is] probably here to stay, and worth knowing about for that reason (just as we need to know about who holds the reins of government), it [is] unlikely to produce the desired harmony within the sector" (Elder, 29 May 2007, ¶ 2).

Central to the CEFR is the concept of levels⁸⁰ and, hence, of proficiency. As in the case of many proficiency tests, the IELTS⁸¹ is said to be aligned with the CEFR⁸².

⁷⁹ ELICOS: (Australia's) English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students.

⁸⁰ The CEFR has six levels: Levels A1 & A2 (Basic user); Levels B1 & B2 (Independent User), and Levels C1 and C2 (Proficient User). Although one of the aims of the authors of the CEFR and related documents was to remove the uncertainty of labels such as 'intermediate', the first of the CEFR levels is often associated with 'beginner', the second with 'elementary', the third with 'intermediate', the fourth with 'upper intermediate' and the last two with 'advanced'. The concept of levels underpinning the CEFR has, however, been seriously questioned (see, for example, Valax, 2011, p.57) and attempts to develop reference level descriptors (RLDs), which link particular aspects of languages to the CEFR's descriptors, have also been found wanting (see, for example, Alderson, 2007, p. 660).

⁸¹ The *International English Language Testing System* is jointly owned by British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL).

In this connection, it is relevant to note that two of the institutions represented attempt to align at least one of their programmes with IELTS bands (and, thus, indirectly, with the CEFR concept of levels). One of the interviewees observed that the four levels of her institution's **EAP** programme are "*benchmarked . . . with IELTS*" (*Institution 4*) and two others (from *Institution 1*) noted that their institution offered a Certificate with grades (A, B and C) that were considered to be equivalent to IELTS bands 7, 6.5 (level C1 of the CEFR) and 6 (level B2 of the CEFR), respectively (*Institution 1*). The **GE** representative of that institution added that their Certificate "*is equivalent to an IELTS course*", and noted that "*we're constantly trying to make sure that our course is actually aligned with IELTS because that's the entry requirement for university*". These responses raise a number of issues, one of which relates to the notion of 'equivalence'. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that comments made by one of the representatives of *Institution 1* suggest that 'equivalence' is judged on the basis of a comparison of the examination grades and proficiency bands of those students who take both forms of assessment.

While the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1* was not resistant to the concept of using a proficiency test such as IELTS to assess the **GE** programme in her institution, adding that this would provide the students with a recognized qualification, she also observed that she believed that such tests were "*[not] a fair representation of a student's ability*". She was, however, in spite of the perceived equivalence between the Certificate qualification offered by her institution and IELTS bands, resistant to the concept of using a proficiency test to assess the institution's **EAP** programme generally, arguing that the programme "*is not an IELTS based programme at all*" (although she also observed that it did have an IELTS component) and that "*the skills we do . . . are totally different from what they do in IELTS*" in that "*we focus on listening to lectures . . . and note taking and answering comprehension questions*". She noted, however, that there was "*a*

⁸² Levels 8 and 9 of IELTS are associated with level C2 of the CEFR, levels 6.5 to 7.5 with level C1 of the CEFR, levels 5 and 6 with level B2 of the CEFR, and levels 4 and 4.5 with levels B1 of the CEFR (<http://www.examenglish.com/examscomparison.php>). It is relevant to note, however, that there is considerable criticism of claims to alignment (see, for example, Hamp-Lyons, 31 May, 2007, ¶ 2; Weir, 2005 pp. 1, 282 & 293) and that the concept of attempting to locate learners on a single vertical scale has itself been criticised (Fulcher, 28 May 2007; McNamara, 31 May, 2007).

certain amount of pressure on the academic programme to maintain our standards in line with IELTS” and that the programme was, in fact, “*relatively tied to the IELTS bands*”, there being “*certainly a level equivalency*”, with those completing Module 4 “*either exit[ing] at . . . IELTS 6 or higher depending on their grade*”. In relation to all of this, it is relevant to note that a review of the course outlines did not indicate any major departure from what is covered in the reading and writing sections of the IELTS academic module.

The representatives of the other three institutions (***Institutions 2, 3 and 4***) indicated that they would **not** be happy to see their institutions’ programmes assessed in terms of a proficiency test such as IELTS, all of them stressing that there were differences between what they offered and what is required for such tests, with one of them (the representative of ***Institution 4***) noting the need for ongoing and more targeted support and another (the representative of ***Institution 2***) observing that she regarded such tests as being ‘very limiting’ and preparation for them as “*not helping to be able to study successfully at undergraduate level*”. This observation is interesting in view of the fact that most tertiary institutions link acceptance of students for whom English is not a first language to performance in proficiency tests such as IELTS.

A number of syllabus design proposals, notably some proposals concerning task-based syllabuses, avoid content specifications that make little or no reference to, for example, structures and structure-related meanings. It does not, of course, necessarily follow from this that the proponents of these syllabus types would necessarily see task-based achievement outcomes (such as the ability to perform certain tasks that are considered to differ in terms, for example, of degree of cognitive complexity) as being indicators of proficiency *as proficiency is generally conceptualized*. It is, however, relevant to note in connection with this that the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001), in relation to which the concept of proficiency levels is fundamental, notes not only that achievement objectives “may be expressed as a Common Reference Level (e.g. B1)” (p.179) or as “a specific constellation of activities, skills and competencies” (p. 137), but also that they may be expressed in terms of tasks “to be achieved in relation to [a given] domain” (p. 137).

In view of all of the issues discussed thus far in this section, interviewees' responses to a question about proficiency-based courses versus courses based on language-specific outcomes is of considerable interest. Two of them (the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1* and the representative of *Institution 3*) said that they believed that there was little difference between proficiency-based courses and courses based on language-specific outcomes; two (the representative of *Institution 3* and the **GE** representative of *Institution 1*) said that they believed that there was a difference, and one (the representative of *Institution 4*) said that there *should not* be a difference. Three of the interviewees indicated that the reason why they believed there was, or should be, little difference was that proficiency and language-specific outcomes were linked:

. . . you have to have a certain language to have the proficiency (the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1*);

. . . you're . . . expecting a certain amount of proficiency . . . as well as . . . using that language (representative of *Institution 3*);

. . any programme should be - the teaching should be tailored to the learning outcomes (representative of *Institution 5*).

Three of the interviewees believed that proficiency-based courses were courses that were designed to prepare students for particular tests (the representative of *Institutions 2* and *3* and the **GE** representative of *Institution 1*), each of them referring specifically to IELTS and one also referring to TOEFL (the representative of *Institution 2*)⁸³.

Of the five sets of documentation supplied by the interviewees:

- three include overall proficiency-style descriptors (*Institutions 2 & 3* and the writing and speaking components of *Institution 1*'s **GE** programme);
- three include achievement objectives in 'can-do' format that are similar to those non-language-specific achievement objectives that characterize the

⁸³ TOEFL = Test of English as a Foreign Language (designed and administered by the Educational Testing Service).

CEFR (Institutions 2 & 4 and Institution 1's GE programme), but do not include detailed specifications relating to linguistic expectations that accompanying these objectives;

- one includes achievement objectives in 'can-do' format that include a considerable amount of linguistic specification (*Institution 3*).

The documentation relating to *Institution 2's* programmes is explicitly based on a proficiency testing format, that is, the *ASLPR*. The documentation relating to the programmes of *Institution 4* and to *Institution 1's GE* programme is clearly influenced by the *CEFR*, a document that is based on the concept of proficiency levels and one that, being intended to be applicable to several languages, does not include language specifics⁸⁴. The documentation relating to *Institution 1's EAP* programme includes very little by way of language specifics. Nor does that documentation include specification in terms of tasks (although this does not necessarily mean that there is no other documentation that does so). In view of all of this, it is surprising to find that most of the interviewees believed that proficiency testing was not an appropriate way to assess their students' performance and, in particular, to find that the representative of *Institution 2*, whose programme documentation is almost wholly proficiency-based, believed proficiency tests to be 'very limiting' and preparation for them to be unhelpful in relation to students' ability to study at undergraduate level.

6.5.2.6 Textbook selection, use and function

Responses to the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 5* indicated that participants were considerably more likely, in selecting textbooks, to be motivated by the language they covered rather than by the activities they included. However, although one third reported that they had no choice about the textbooks used for their courses, just over one fifth indicated that they allowed textbooks to determine course syllabuses.

For all, or some of their programmes, commercially available textbooks appear to be widely used by teachers in all of the institutions represented by the

⁸⁴ The more recent development of RLDs (reference level descriptors) seems to have had little impact on this documentation.

interviewees. Although final decision-making rested in some cases with institutional managers and/or senior teachers, the process of selection of these textbooks was generally described as involving consultation with teachers. Textbooks appear to play a relatively major role in the design and delivery of some of the courses offered by the institutions whose programme managers/co-ordinators participated in the interviews. Thus, for example, part of the **GE** programme of *Institution 1* was described as being “*made up of textbook-based core language development lessons*” (the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1* who referred specifically to *Cutting Edge* and *New Headway*), the programme itself being described as “very loose”, with teachers “*basically are using our course book*” (the **GE** representative of *Institution 1*). In that institution, commercially available textbooks were said to be used also in Business English courses, although the textbook materials were described as being “adapted a lot” and supplemented by “task-based stuff” (the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1*). Although it was indicated that resources prepared in-house were used for an optional topic-based component of the **GE** programme and for the **EAP** programme offered by *Institution 1*, it was also noted that a textbook was used “*for the second class in academic*” (selected by a group of teachers, including the ‘senior academic teacher) and for listening skills (**EAP** representative of *Institution 1*). A general reference was also made by one of the representatives of that institution (**EAP** representative) to “*a range of textbooks, including “an Oxford one and . . . a Cambridge one and a Longman one*”. The representatives of the other institutions indicated (a) that textbooks were used by the teachers (*Institution 3*); (b) that there was a large number of textbooks from which teachers could choose sections in an ‘eclectic approach’ (*Institution 2*), and (c) that there was “*a base text for the General English classes*” and that, a range of textbooks was used for advanced classes, there being no single ‘base text’ (*Institution 4*).

So far as writing courses (or writing components of courses) are concerned, the influence of textbooks was clearly in evidence. One of the interviewees said that in general “*the book limits us in the topics*” and that “*at Level 5 it is . . . closely related to the book*” (*Institution 3*). One observed that ‘Oshima and Hogue’ was

the ‘base text’ used in the **GE** writing programme in her institution (*Institution 4*) and three others (representing *Institutions 1* and *3*), in describing writing programmes in their institution⁸⁵, all used expressions that are clearly reminiscent of the approach adopted in that textbook, one in which there is an absence of a clear distinction between text type and discourse mode and between both of these and semantic relations, and in which “‘essay’ is . . . treated as a genre and ‘chronological process and/or chronological order essay’ as a sub-genre” (Huang Wu, 2011, p. 35). It appears, therefore, that textbooks may have a very considerable impact on the nature of the curriculum, including the syllabus.

6.5.2.7 Assessment

Many of the issues discussed above have a direct bearing on assessment, an area in which there appear to be very different approaches in different institutions. Thus, one of the interviewees said that one of the reasons for not assessing students by means of proficiency tests was that they are ‘one-off type things’, apparently indicating a preference for formative rather than summative assessment (*Institution 4*). Another, in rejecting the notion that some courses might be assessed by proficiency tests such as IELTS, observed that it was unnecessary to do so because she had “*every confidence in the . . . reliability . . . and the rigor of our testing processes*”, adding that the lecturers in her institution were very experienced and that some of them were IELTS examiners (*Institution 2*). On the other hand, one (the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1*) noted that the skills focused on in the **EAP** programme in her institution ‘are completely different’ from those focused on in IELTS – although those to which she referred (listening to lectures, note-taking and answering comprehension [questions]) are, in fact, very similar to skills included in the academic version of the IELTS test. She also observed that she believed that IELTS was “[not] a fair representation of a student’s ability’ and actually tested “*whether they’re good at taking the IELTS exam or not*”. It is, however, worth noting that the same thing could be said of tests and examinations developed by teaching institutions, tests and examinations

⁸⁵ The relevant sections from their responses are: [W]e start with descriptive essays, narrative, compare and contrast, advantages and disadvantages, process, discursive and finally argumentative (one of the representatives of *Institution 1*); . . . writing different kinds of essay like problem-solution, compare and contrast; and [W]e’re looking at different essay types, problem solution, cause effect, compare contrast (the other representative of *Institution 1*).

which are not subjected to the rigorous procedures that apply in the case of IELTS. In connection with this, it is interesting to observe that the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1*, while noting (a) that assessment was “*a real bone of contention*” in her institution (with teachers disagreeing with some of the aspects tested) and (b) that there was no dedicated team of assessment writers and that piloting was not possible, stressed that teachers were not allowed to see tests in advance to avoid the phenomenon of teaching to tests. She added that question types in the case of reading included “*true-false, multiple choice, short answer, matching headings, vocabulary, whatever*”. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that a version of the IELTS test is specifically designed with tertiary level students in mind, three of the interviewees stated or implied that proficiency tests were not consistent with the needs of tertiary level students (*Institutions 2* and *3* and the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1*). Even so, one of the interviewees (the **GE** representative of *Institution 1*) said that her institution was “*constantly trying to make sure that our course is actually aligned with IELTS because that’s the entry requirement for university*”.

Only one of the five interviewees (the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1*) said that the final assessments were based on and designed around curriculum documents. One (*Institution 2*) indicated that there was no summative assessment of courses in her institution and another (*Institution 3*) suggested that this was also the case in her institution, adding that formative assessment in her institution was based on the textbooks used.

Since it is impossible to assess students’ performance in courses with any degree of confidence unless there is clarity about *what* students can be expected to achieve (the achievement objectives/intended outcomes – see 5.5.3.2 above) and *how* (using what language) they can be expected to achieve it, programme documentation that omits either of these is unlikely to be of any real value in relation to assessment.

6.6 Some concluding remarks

In common with the majority of those teachers who participated in the questionnaire-based survey, all five of the interviewees appear to believe in the

importance of having explicit syllabuses for the courses and programmes offered by their institutions (with the possible exception of very short courses of the 'holiday English' variety), with none appearing to be in favour of the sort of abandonment of a distinction between syllabus and methodology that Nunan (1989, p. 1) has argued may be associated with the development of communicative language teaching generally and a 'task-based approach' more specifically (see *Chapter 2*). Even so, the actual course and programme documentation made available by these institutions was found to vary considerably, with the documentation provided by only one of them (*Institution 3*) providing *specific* (rather than very general) achievement objectives/learning outcomes and including some clear indication of course content.

One of the interviewees claimed that a primary skills focus characterized the **GE** courses at her institution. However, she added that these courses also included "textbook-based core language development lessons", with teachers "*basically . . . using [the] course book*". All four of the other interviewees indicated that they believed that all of the following had an equally important role to play in course content: *grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills, learning skills*. Even so, potential differences in approach to grammatical specification are suggested by the fact that two of the interviewees referred to the importance of 'noticing' in a way that may be indicative of a tendency towards the type of 'focus on form' approach advocated by Long (1988), an approach that can lead to a very different type of organization within the syllabus from that generally associated with a more traditional approach to a structural syllabus, or the structural component of a syllabus (as found, for example, in *Landmark* (Haines & Stewart, 2000)). Although, with one possible exception, all of the interviewees believed that grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills and learning skills all played an important role in the courses offered by their institutions, they also all indicated that the main content focus of courses was different at different stages, with courses at higher levels being less focused on grammar and more on vocabulary, skills and topics. Overall, therefore, it would appear that the interviewees were in favour of some type of hybrid syllabus, with a general tendency towards something like the proportional approach recommended by Yalden (1983), in

which an initial 'structural phase' (in which formal and ideational meaning are the focus of attention) is followed by a number of more 'communicative phases' (focusing on functional, discoursal and rhetorical components) and a final 'specialized phase' (see *Chapter 2*).

Commercially available textbooks appear to be widely used by all of the institutions represented by the interviewees. However, approaches to textbook selection and use appear to vary widely, with teachers selecting sections from a range of textbooks, adapting and/or supplementing textbooks (in at least one case by what was described as 'task-based' materials), or, in the case of at least one aspect of one of the programmes offered, using a textbook as a primary source. Associated with each of these approaches is a range of different issues. Thus, for example, selecting from a range of textbooks in a 'eclectic' way can necessitate major adaptation of the materials (as can moving from one series to another at particular stages as many of the questionnaire participants reported doing) if potential problems relating to the differences in content and content staging and organization in different textbooks are to be avoided, while using a textbook as a primary source may mean that the textbook tends to dictate rather than reflect the syllabus, particularly in cases where the course documentation is expressed in very general terms.

The textbooks to which interviewees made specific reference in relation to **GE** courses were *New Headway* (Soars & Soars, 1996, 2000a, 2000b & 2002) and *New Cutting Edge* (Moor & Cunningham, 2005a & b), both of which claim to be based on syllabuses that prioritize grammar and vocabulary, with an additional topic focus in the case of the former and an additional skills focus in the case of the latter (see *Chapter 4*). The textbook to which interviewees made both direct and indirect reference in relation to **EAP** courses (and the writing component of at least one of the **GE** programmes) was *Writing Academic English* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991). This textbook appears to be a popular choice although, as indicated earlier (see *Chapter 4*), it is one that is characterized by a number of inconsistencies and contradictions. This, combined with, for example, the fact that four of the five interviewees claimed some link between the programmes offered

by their institutions and the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) but seemed vague or uncertain about specific aspects of the approach to content specification recommended in the CEFR (something that Valax (2011, p. i) also found to be true of many of the participants in a CEFR-related survey he conducted) suggests that, in common with some of the teachers who contributed to the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 5*, they may not all be fully aware of the range of issues with which those who have proposed different approaches to language syllabus design have been concerned.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions and reflections

7.1 Introduction

My overall aim in this research project was to attempt to determine (a) the extent to which proposals relating to L2 syllabuses have impacted on the design of widely used, commercially produced English language textbooks intended primarily for adult learners, and (b) the decisions made by English language teachers and language programme managers/co-ordinators working in the tertiary sector around textbook and syllabus choices. A critical review of selected publications in the area of second/ additional language syllabus design (see *Chapter 2*) provided the context in which (a) samples of widely used commercially available GE and EAP textbooks published from the mid-1960s onwards (intended for adult learners of English) were analysed in relation to the nature of their underlying syllabuses (see *Chapter 4*), and (b) a survey was conducted in which (i) a sample of teachers of English as a second/ additional language working in five different countries completed a questionnaire relating, in particular, to their opinions about course content, and (ii) a sample of language programme managers/ co-ordinators operating in the tertiary sector in New Zealand took part in semi-structured interviews relating, in particular, to the nature and content of the English language courses and programmes offered by the institutions in which they worked (see *Chapters 5 and 6*). This chapter provides an overview and discussion of the research findings as they relate to each of the two overarching questions that guided the research, starting with the second of the two research questions (7.2), followed by an indication of the perceived weaknesses of the research (7.3) and the nature of the contribution it makes (7.4).

7.2 Overview of research findings

7.2.1 Syllabus design and syllabus content: Attitudes and practices of a sample of English language teachers and language programme managers/co-ordinators

The relevant overarching research question in this area was:

How do a sample of teachers and programme managers/co-ordinators working in the context of higher educational institutions decide on the nature of the syllabuses underpinning the courses and programmes they offer for learners of English, and to what extent, if at all, are any decisions they make about textbook selection influenced by the nature of the syllabuses that underpin these textbooks?

7.2.1.1 Curriculum and syllabus: General beliefs and practices

More than one third of the ninety three (93) teachers of English as a second/additional language who completed the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 5* indicated that the institution in which they worked either did not have an *overall curriculum* for the English courses it offered or that they did not know whether it had one or not, with several (14) adding comments indicating that the curriculum documents that *were* made available to them were inadequate, incomplete or unhelpful. So far as *institutional syllabus documents* are concerned, while the majority of questionnaire participants considered those that *were* provided to be essential, very useful or useful, approximately one third either did not respond (10%) or indicated that they found them to be ‘not very useful’ or ‘not useful at all’ (19%), with ten of the twenty-four comments provided making reference to the lack of clarity of the syllabus documentation made available to them. Even so, only just over half indicated that they actually referred to syllabuses provided by their institutions in determining the content of their courses. Notwithstanding the availability (or otherwise) of institutional syllabus documents, or the extent to which those that were available were actually consulted, the vast majority of questionnaire participants (82/88%) reported that they believed that it was important to have a syllabus for each of the courses they taught (while allowing for adaptation in response to students’ ability to cope). Where they were *not* provided with institutional syllabuses, however, over one third (37%) indicated that they would either allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeded or focus on materials and methodology *rather than* syllabus, with almost one third indicating that the selection of an appropriate textbook (generally motivated by the extent to which it included the language they wanted to cover rather than by the activities it contained) was part of the process involved

in deciding what to teach, and approximately the same number indicating that they would allow textbooks to determine syllabus content.

Overall, the views of the five language programme managers/co-ordinators interviewed (representing four different institutions) on issues relating to the importance of curricula generally, and syllabuses in particular, were similar to those held by the majority of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire-based survey. However, some of the comments they made, combined with the documentation they provided suggests that their intentions and aspirations are not always realized in practice. Thus, for example, one of the interviewees noted that planning was 'very loose' in the case of one of the programmes offered and that there was no 'actual curriculum', adding that the content of courses "depended on the students and the class at the time". This comment related to a GE programme. It was not made in the context of some reference (direct or indirect) to a negotiated syllabus or with reference to short 'holiday-type' English courses (whose content is often decided in consultation with overseas institutions). In fact, the documentation provided by only one of the institutions includes a reasonably clear indication of the language content of the courses offered. In the case of another institution, there was found to be very little difference between the (very general) documentation relating to different courses within the same overall programme although these courses were described as being at different levels. In the case of yet another institution's documentation, classes were said to be "*based on published course books*", something that suggests that, however carefully these textbooks are selected, much of the course content is determined by these textbooks. In connection with all of this, it is relevant to note that although all of the programme managers/ co-ordinators had the expectation that teachers would be able to interpret, contest, modify and/or create courses, the assumption, presumably, being that decision-making in this area would be guided by some coherent, theoretically-based and historically grounded rationale, none of the institutions represented by the interviewees appears to provide staff development opportunities specific to this area.

In general, both the language teachers and the language programme managers/co-ordinators were in favour of institutions providing curriculum documentation. Where, however, the teachers were provided with such documentation, it was not always judged to be of a high standard and appears not always to be consulted by teachers in the preparation of their courses. Approximately one third of the teachers consulted textbooks in determining the content of their courses.

7.2.1.2 Curriculum and syllabus: Issues relating to course integration

One of the functions of institutional curriculum documentation is generally to indicate the links among the various courses that make up the programme as a whole. A number of questions in both the questionnaire and interviews therefore sought to determine whether participants believed that the courses taken by students should be related in a way that ensured that the overall programme provided to students was a coherent and integrated one. Only approximately half of the questionnaire respondents believed that all of the English courses a student took in any particular year should be directly related to one another. Even so, almost all of them indicated that they would try to take account, either in whole or in part, in teaching a reading (or writing) course of the content of any writing (or reading) course being taken by the same students at the same stage in their programme, often by using reading texts as models for writing texts (although only approximately half of them claimed that they were actually aware of the content of other courses being taken by their students in the same year as those they themselves were teaching). Furthermore, when asked whether, if they used a textbook from a particular series with a group of first year students, they would select the next highest level textbook from the same series for the same students when they were in their second year, approximately 35% of questionnaire respondents indicated that they would do so, with the remainder indicating that they would not (9%), or that they did not know whether or not they would do so (41%). While many of the comments added in relation to this question referred to the desirability of variety, none made reference to potential problems, in terms of discontinuity and overall programme content, associated with switching from one series to another, especially where textbooks are being used as a major source rather than as an additional resource. The questions asked of interviewees that related to course integration referred specifically to skills-based courses. In

responding to a question asking whether they believed that skills-based courses taught to the same group of students in the same year should be closely linked, all but one of the interviewees indicated that they believed that they should be, with the linkage among courses being seen in terms of themes in one case, topics in another, and a combination of topics, vocabulary, concepts and ideas in a third. Thus, so far at least as skills-based courses are concerned, most of the managers/programme co-ordinators and approximately half of the teachers involved in this research project appear, in general, to be in favour of ensuring that there *are* links between courses. However, in the programme documentation supplied by the interviewees any such linkages are largely unsignalled/covert. Overall, it appears that the issue of language programme integration is one about which views differ and there is, in some cases, considerable uncertainty.

Although only approximately half of the questionnaire respondents believed that the English courses that students took in any particular year should be directly related to one another, four of the five interviewees believed that, at least so far as skills-based courses are concerned, they should be. However, there was little evidence in the documentation provided by the interviewees of specific links between courses likely to be taken at the same time by the same cohort of students.

7.2.1.3 Course content: Beliefs and practices

In terms of the actual content of courses, the majority of questionnaire respondents indicated that they would include *vocabulary, language structures, tasks* and *activities* in core language development courses at all levels, with, however, approximately two thirds of those who responded to the relevant question indicating that they preferred task-supported to task-based learning (and 24% indicating that they would not include tasks at all at beginner level). Four of the five interviewees indicated that it was equally important to include all of these in their courses (with the other interviewee observing that the main focus of GE courses taught in her institution was language skills). All of the interviewees and most of the questionnaire respondents also considered *learning skills/strategies* to be an important aspect of the content of language courses. However, in the documentation provided by the interviewees, references to learning skills were either absent altogether or were very general in nature. Also, although one of the

interviewees referred on several occasions to the importance of tasks in her institution's EAP programme, the documentation relating to that programme makes very little reference to tasks.

An almost equal number of questionnaire participants indicated that they preferred (40) or preferred not (39) to focus at beginner and elementary level on words and sentences rather than on larger stretches of language, and just over one fifth that they would *not* include language structures at beginner level. So far as writing courses are concerned, four of the interviewees made a distinction between lower level and higher level writing courses, two of them indicating that there should be a stronger focus on grammar in the former. There seemed to be, in general terms, agreement about the types of content appropriate for writing courses. However, wording used by at least three of the interviewees suggests that their views may have been strongly influenced by a particular textbook written by Oshima and Hogue (1991), one that was actually referred to directly by one of the interviewees.

So far as textual cohesion is concerned, although the CEFR and many national language curricula clearly signal the inclusion of some cohesive devices from the very early stages of language learning, just under two thirds of respondents indicated that they would *not* include cohesive devices at beginner level and just under one quarter that they would *not* do so at elementary level (although the percentage of those located in Australia and New Zealand who would not do so was lower). So far as genre is concerned, a considerable number of respondents indicated that they would *not* include *description*, *recount* or *instruction* at beginner (55%, 48% and 59% respectively) or elementary levels (32%, 36% and 35.5% respectively) or *argument* at intermediate (32%) or advanced levels (29%).

In this general area of discourse, there was evidence of some widely differing views and considerable confusion. Thus, for example, an almost equal number of questionnaire respondents indicated that they would or would not include *description*, *recount* and *instruction* at beginner level and *ellipsis* and *substitution* at intermediate level, and although only just over half indicated that they would

include *types of linkage between clauses* at elementary level (55%), well over three quarters (86%) indicated that they would include *cohesive devices* at that level. In view of this, and bearing in mind that the last two decades have been characterized by an ever increasing focus on the inclusion of discourse features in course content, particularly in the area of EAP it is, perhaps, not surprising that under half (39/42%) of the participants indicated that they believed that changes in syllabus design over that period had led to increased learner proficiency. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that none of the programme documentation provided by the *interviewees* makes any reference to ellipsis or substitution. or, with the exception of one very general reference in one institution's documentation, to types of semantic links between clauses. In the case of one of the institutions, the programme documentation supplied makes no reference to genre. In the case of another, reference is made to genre in very general terms (e.g. "various genres") except on one occasion (when reference is made to 'simple narrative' at pre-intermediate level). So far as the documentation relating to the other two institutions is concerned, one set refers to *narrative* at elementary level and to *narrative, recount, report* and *instruction* at intermediate level; the other includes a combination of very general references to genre and some more specific references (e.g. narrative and argument) at one of the higher levels.

In addition to signalling the types of content they considered appropriate for the courses offered by their institutions (which indicate, in common with the questionnaire respondents, an orientation towards a hybrid syllabus of a type that appears to be generally aligned with the type of core and spiral approach recommended by Brumfit (1980)), the interviewees provided some information about the overall focus of courses at different levels which suggests a more specific orientation towards the type of proportional approach recommended by Yalden (1983) in which an initial 'structural phase' (in which formal and ideational meaning are the focus of attention) is followed by a number of 'communicative phases' (focusing on functional, discursal and rhetorical components) and a final 'specialized phase' Thus, for example, all of the interviewees signalled a general move from a focus on clause, sentence and

paragraph construction in the earlier stages to a more discourse-focused one later and, finally, a focus on skills very specific to academic contexts (see above). One of the interviewees signalled that there was a greater focus on grammar in the early stages of her institution's programmes, another observed that at the highest level, her institution's EAP programme was combined with mainstream study and included subject/discipline-related vocabulary and topics.

While the vast majority of questionnaire participants indicated that they were currently more confident about what they should teach in core language development courses (87.5%), and writing courses (86%) than they were when they began teaching, it appears that this confidence may not necessarily be matched by competence in the area of syllabus design. Thus, for example, although most (73/78%) of the participants indicated that they could provide a list of specific outcomes for each of their courses if asked to do so, fewer (62 /67%) actually provided an example and very few of these examples were clearly indicative of what the students were expected to be able to do using the target language on completion of the course, the majority either lacking language indicators altogether or being too general to be measurable. Interviewee responses to a number of questions suggest that at least some of them may be equally uncertain about course outcome specification. Asked whether their institutional curricula included a list of objectives/ outcomes/ 'can-do' statements and whether, if so, an example could be provided, the representative of *Institution 3* said that no such list was available and the **EAP** representative of *Institution 1* said that no such list was available for the **EAP** courses offered by her institution. The others indicated that there was such a list for each of the courses offered (*Institutions 2* and *4*) or that there was such a list for the **GE** courses offered (*Institution 1*). None of the interviewees provided an example. In fact, all but one of the sets of documentation supplied (i.e. the documentation relating to *Institution 1*'s **EAP** programme) *do* include achievement objectives in the form of 'can-do' statements. However, these statements vary considerably in terms of degree of specificity, often being open to a wide range of possible interpretations. Furthermore, when the questionnaire respondents were asked to list three aspects of discourse they considered important, only twenty-eight (28/30%) responded. In

spite of this, participants' top priority in-service training priority was testing and evaluation, with only half selecting syllabus design.

Most of the questionnaire respondents and all but one of the interviewees indicated that it was equally important to include vocabulary, language structures, tasks and activities in core language development courses, with almost all of them also considering learning skills/ strategies to be an important aspect of course content (although the last of these was largely absent from the documentation supplied), and one clearly indicating her belief that task-based learning should form an important part of her institution's EAP programme (although this was not clearly signalled in the documentation supplied). While almost all of the questionnaire and interview data indicated a preference for a hybrid syllabus, questionnaire participants differed significantly in relation to their views about more detailed aspects of course content, such as, for example, whether a focus on cohesive devices of various types, particular genres and stretches of language larger than the sentence should be included at beginner and elementary levels. So far as courses that focus on writing are concerned, the interviewees appeared to be in general agreement about overall content, with a focus on clause, sentence and paragraph construction in the earlier stages being gradually replaced by one in which there was a greater focus on the construction of longer texts in a variety of genres, summarizing, paraphrasing, referencing and more abstract vocabulary. While almost all of the questionnaire and interview data indicated a preference for something similar to the core and spiral type hybrid syllabus recommended by Brumfit (1980), the information provided by some of the interviewees signalled a preference for the more specific proportional type of syllabus recommended by Yalden (1983). Although all of the programme managers/co-ordinators expected language teachers to be able to interpret, contest, modify and/or create courses, and although the questionnaire respondents appeared to be generally confident about their ability to do so, responses to some of the questions, particularly those relating to the specification of course outcomes and aspects of discourse considered important, suggest a considerable degree of uncertainty and confusion in some areas.

7.2.1.4 Assessment

While most of the interviewees stressed the fact that there was a relationship between the achievements of their students at particular levels and proficiency test bands (particularly those associated with the IELTS test), they also stressed the fact that some aspects of the content of their courses were not accommodated in internationally recognized proficiency tests and none of them was in favour of replacing institution-internal summative assessment by such tests. However, except in the case of general proficiency-based testing (which does not relate directly to specific aspects of course content), the construction of genuinely useful formative and summative assessment instruments (and, hence, their overall validity) relies heavily on the extent to which course and programme content is clearly specified and, as indicated above, most of the curriculum documentation supplied by the interviewees was lacking in specific content detail. It may be partly for this reason that only one of the interviewees indicated that final assessments were based on, and designed around curriculum documents. While she observed that she had “every confidence in the . . . reliability . . . and the rigor of our testing processes”, this confidence was apparently not shared by the institution's teachers, assessment being described as “a real bone of contention”. In the case of two of the other institutions represented, the interviewees indicated that there was no summative assessment and, in one case, that formative assessment was based on the textbooks used. Bearing in mind the fact that (a) approximately one third of questionnaire respondents reported heavy reliance on textbooks, and (b) interviewees reported widespread use of textbooks, with at least one of the programmes offered by one of the institutions being referred to in the programme documentation as being “*based on* published course books”, relating assessment directly to textbook content seems not unreasonable, particularly as some commercially available textbook series, such as *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005 & 2006) include assessment material that appears to have been very carefully constructed. Even so, this does provide a further indication of the extent to which some institutions rely on textbook writers to determine critical aspects of their courses and programmes.

Most of the interviewees stressed that there was a relationship between the achievements of their students at particular levels and particular proficiency test bands. However, none of them was in favour of replacing institution-internal summative assessment by internationally recognized proficiency tests, and two of them indicated that there was no summative assessment in the case of their institution's programmes, with one noting that formative assessment was linked to the textbooks used. Although most of the programme documentation supplied by the interviewees was lacking in course content detail, one of the interviewees observed that summative assessment was designed around programme documentation. Her confidence in that assessment was, however, apparently not shared by the institution's teachers.

7.2.1.5 Influence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

Four of the five interviewees (representing three different institutions) claimed that there was a link between the programmes their institutions offered and the CEFR, one observing that this is " [because] we want to be . . . academically robust and we want to make sure that we [are] . . . aligned with what's considered best practice internationally", suggesting that this is true of " reputable institutions in NZ and Australia". In fact, however, in a study concerning the possibility of introducing the CEFR in relation to the ELICOS industry, Elder and O'Loughlin (2007) concluded that there was "no guarantee that any instantiation of the framework developed by one institution would be equivalent to other instantiations". In the case of the fourth institution, the programme documentation provided indicates that specifications are based on the 1995 version of the *Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR): General Proficiency Version for English* (adapted and abridged), except in the case of the categories relating to speaking - which are said to be taken from the *Occupational English Test for Health Professionals* (McNamara, 1988).

Given the fact that the CEFR is intended to relate to European languages generally, being neutral with respect to individual languages, and given also the fact that Valax (2011, pp. 164-257) has demonstrated, with reference to national curricula in France and New Zealand, the extreme difficulty of relating course

design to CEFR descriptors, the fact that the programme documentation supplied by the four interviewees who claimed alignment with the CEFR bears only, at most, a very tenuous relationship with the CEFR is unsurprising. However, in order to provide language-specific guidance for users of the Framework, Reference Level Descriptions (RLDs) for individual languages are being developed. These are intended to "identify the specific forms of any given language . . . at each of the six reference levels" and "can be set as objectives for learning, or used to establish whether a user has attained the level of proficiency in question" (English Profile: CEFR for English, n.d.). While RLDs for English, which attempt to specify vocabulary, grammar etc. in relation to CEFR levels are still in development, what is often referred to as the 'T-series' (that is, *Breakthrough* (Trim, 2009), *Waystage* (Van Ek & Trim, 1991a), *Threshold level 1990* (Van Ek & Trim, 1991b) and *Vantage* (Van Ek & Trim, 2001)), which relates directly to English, is already available. Whatever their views of these resources/ projects, it is relevant to note that none of the interviewees made reference to them in the context of other references to the CEFR and that none of the programme documentation provided includes *detailed* course content specifications.

While interviewees representing three of the institutions claimed some alignment between their programmes and the CEFR, evidence of any such alignment was, at most, tenuous in the programme documentation they supplied, documentation which was largely absent of any detailed course content specifications.

7.2.2 The first research question

The first research question was:

In what ways, and to what extent (if at all) have the syllabuses underpinning a sample of widely used textbooks (designed for general and/ or academic purposes) that are intended primarily for adult learners of English changed since the 1960s, and can any major influences or trends be detected in relation to any such changes?

The research question above was addressed through the analysis, from the perspective of underlying syllabus design principles and syllabus content, of a sample of widely used, commercially produced textbooks (both general English textbooks (GE) and textbooks oriented towards English for Academic Purposes (EAP)) intended for adult learners of English that were available from the mid-1960s onwards.

As indicated above, approximately one third of questionnaire respondents indicated that they would allow textbooks to determine syllabus content, and textbooks appear to play a relatively major role in the design and delivery of some of the courses offered by the institutions whose programme managers/ coordinators participated in the interviews, with, for example, one of the interviewees observing that her institution's GE courses are "made up of textbook-based core language development lessons". This, combined with the overall absence of detailed course content specifications in the programme documentation provided by the interviewees, suggests that the decisions that textbook writers make about the nature of the syllabuses underpinning their work can have a profound impact on the courses and programmes offered by institutions.

7.2.1.1 General English (GE) textbooks

The two textbooks analyzed that were produced in the 1960s were from *Situational English* (The Commonwealth Office of Education, 1965) and *New Concept English* (Alexander, 1967). In each case, the underlying syllabuses were found to be largely structural. Thus, for example, in *Situational English*, we find what is described as "a syllabus of grammatical points - i.e. of items which function in sentence structure . . . arranged in an order which allows each new . . . item to be taught as the only new . . . item in a sentence-pattern otherwise composed of known . . . items", with "vocabulary items being . . . chosen because they are typical vocabulary commonly associated with the sentence-patterns taught" (*Situational English: Teacher's Book*, Part 1, pp. 3 & 4). In both textbooks, however, there is clear evidence of *situationalization* of the essentially structural syllabus. In the case of *Situational English*, this is evidenced in (a) the presentation of structures in situational contexts (which determines, to some extent at least, their ordering), (b) the inclusion, in the early stages, of "[a] few

more complex sentence-patterns [which] are needed . . . because they are socially useful", and (c) the appearance of some more lexically-focused units, which include some topic-related vocabulary items (e.g. relating to the weather) and/or vocabulary items that are considered to be of particular importance (e.g. numbers, colours). In the case of *New Concept English*, the *situationalization* is more thorough, with several structures and/or formulaically realized functions (e.g. greetings) generally being introduced together within the context of a particular situation. This *situationalization* of an essentially structural syllabus is reminiscent of the approach to syllabus design adopted in audio-visual language courses (such as *Voix et images de France*) which began to emerge in France in the early 1960s and which were strongly influenced by the structuro-global theorizing of Petar Guberin, in which situational context played an important role (Puren, 1988, p. 34).

In *Kernel Lessons* (1971) first published in the early 1970s, we find, once again, a largely *situationalized* structural syllabus, but one in which there is also evidence of *functionalization*, with one section of each unit being organized, in part, around some commonly occurring functions, such as apologising. By the mid-1970s, as exemplified in *Strategies*, the impact of an increasing focus on language functions in the work of linguists associated with the Council of Europe was beginning to be reflected in the design of the syllabuses underpinning commercially available textbooks. Thus, for example, in the Teachers' book, the syllabus underlying *Strategies* (Abbs & Freebairn, 1975) is described as being "functional rather than structural", a syllabus in which "[the] structural contents have been selected as being appropriate to . . . particular functions" so that "the student will see the immediate practical application of what he (sic) is learning while covering the more important structures of the language in a graded sequence" (Abbs & Freebairn, 1975, p. iv). In fact, however, although there is some material in *Strategies* that is clearly functionally organized (the functions highlighted being often those that are generally realized formulaically, such as *greetings* and *introductions*), what are essentially lexico-grammatically organized units often have the superficial appearance of being functional because of the way in which they are introduced (e.g. *Talk about the weather; Ask and talk about the past*).

Overall, while the syllabus underpinning *Strategies* is very similar in many ways to the *situationalized structural* one that characterized *Kernel Lessons*, a considerably increased emphasis on vocabulary and, to some extent, linguistic functions means that it would be more appropriate to refer to the syllabus as a *situationalized and functionalized lexico-structural* one. This is also largely true of *Main Course English* (Garton-Sprenger, Jupp & Prowse, 1979), although there is here more evidence of genuinely functionally organized content (including functions such as *apologising*, *excusing* and *congratulating*). In fact, the syllabus underpinning *Main course English* represents the type of accommodation of structural, lexical, functional and topic-based/ situational syllabus design perspectives that was to become the norm throughout the 1980s, with, however, as in the case of *Network* (Eastwood et al., 1980), an increasing tendency to provide notional labelling (e.g. possession) for what remain essentially morphological and/or grammatical categories (possessive adjectives), and with very little evidence (except in the case of *Reading and Thinking in English* (The British Council, 1979a & b; 1980a & b) which pre-figures some of the discourse focus found in later EAP- oriented textbooks) of any significant impact of research on discourse analysis. Overall, what we have are variants of the *core and spiral approach to syllabus design* recommended by Brumfit (1980), in which "notional, functional and situational specifications can be conceived of as a spiral round a basically grammatical [and lexical] core" (p. 6).

The type of hybrid syllabus that began to be detectable in commercially produced general English textbooks of the 1960s (with situationalization of an essentially grammatical syllabus) gradually evolved during the 1970s and 1980s into an essentially situationalized and functionalized lexico-grammatical syllabus. From the 1990s onwards, the impact of functions tended to be very considerably reduced (see, for example, *New Cutting Edge* (Moor & Cunningham, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2010) as awareness of the critical role that context plays in all but formulaically encoded functions grew and, with it, awareness of the limited extent to which functional classification could be systematized. An increased focus on skills (including learning skills) was generally added to the mix, as was, in some cases, a limited range of discourse features. Occasionally (as in the case

of *Landmark* (Haines, & Stewart, 2000a, 2000b), there has been considerably reduced emphasis on the inclusion of an organized and progressive grammatical core.

The increasingly complex mix that has made up the underlying syllabuses of commercially produced GE textbooks in recent decades has sometimes led to a successful accommodation/ integration of a range of different perspectives on language syllabus design (as in the case of *Touchstone*). Sometimes, however (as in the case of *New Headway* and *Landmark*), the attempt to accommodate differing perspectives has been less successful, leading to what appears to be a somewhat disjointed, even haphazard approach to syllabus specification.

In *New Headway* (Soars & Soars, 1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2003), even within single units, the various components (grammar, vocabulary, postscript, reading, writing, listening and speaking) sometimes appear to bear little other than a broadly thematic relationship with one another and there is, furthermore, an absence, in some cases, of any clear connection between the unit topic and unit content. There is, in addition, little evidence that careful consideration has been paid to frequency or utility in the selection of vocabulary; while some functions (all unitary ones) are included, they seem to be presented as add-ons, bearing no detectable relationship to the main theme of the unit in which they appear; where language focus points are labelled, that labelling is primarily grammatical rather than notional/ semantic; cohesion appears only sporadically and always in writing sections; and there is little variety in terms of genres and text-types. A similar situation obtains in the case of *Landmark* (Haines, & Stewart, 2000a, 2000b), where the labelling of language indicators may be structurally-, lexically-, notionally- or functionally-focused (with no readily detectable rationale for some of the variations), where neither the situational nor linguistic focus may be maintained from one section to the next, and where attention to discourse features appears to be both sporadic and highly selective (with, for example, a limited range of genres and text-types being exemplified in reading sections). In the case of this textbook, there is some evidence of the 'focus on form' approach recommended by Long (1988), with some selected structures that appear in texts

(in this case, texts chosen in relation primarily to their lexical focus) receiving attention as they emerge. In the case of *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005 & 2006), however, which is 'corpus-informed', drawing on "extensive research into the corpus of North American English in the Cambridge International Corpus" (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005 - *Touchstone 1, Teacher's edition*, p. iv), the syllabus components, made up largely of *situationalized* and *functionalized* lexical, grammatical and phonological specifications, supplemented by conversational strategies and skills-based and discourse-based specifications, appear to have been, in general, carefully selected and integrated. There are, however, some problems associated with the categorization and treatment of semantic relations, the fact that the rhetorical structuring of texts is largely neglected and the under-representation of a number of genres.

With the exception of textbooks written by those who have been instrumental in proposing lexical and relational syllabuses (*The Collins COBUILD English Course* (Willis & Willis, 1989), *Writing texts in English* (Crombie & Johnson, 2009) and *A genre-based approach to academic writing* (Johnson & Crombie, 2011)), there is little evidence that these syllabus design proposals have had any major impact on the syllabuses underpinning commercially produced GE textbooks, although there *is* evidence (see above) of increasing attention being paid to vocabulary and discourse features. Similarly, the writers of general English language textbooks produced by major publishing houses have shown little enthusiasm for task-based syllabus design (as recommended by, for example, Prabhu (1987) and Nunan (1989)), a possible exception being *Listen for it* (Richards, Gordon & Harper, 1987). However, although this book is sub-titled *A task-based listening course*, the underlying syllabus is by no means exclusively task-based. Even so, there is clear evidence of an increased variety of tasks in almost all of the textbooks that have appeared since the 1980s.

By the 1960s, there was already evidence in commercially available general English textbooks that the grammatical syllabus was becoming situationalized, with indications of incipient functionalization of the syllabus emerging in the early 1970s. Also evident was an increasing lexicalization of the syllabus.

However, some attempts to create a more wholly functional syllabus in the late 1970s and 1980s appear to have been largely abandoned by the 1990s. By that time, the syllabuses underpinning General English language textbooks tended to have a largely situationalized and functionalized lexico-grammatical core (signalling the emergence of something a hybrid syllabus similar in type to the core and spiral syllabus design recommended by Brumfit (1980)). From the 1990s onwards, there was an increasing focus on skills (including learning skills), with a limited range of discourse features being added to the mix, yielding, in some cases, a more complex type of hybrid syllabus in which the various components all appear to have been successfully accommodated, and in others, what appears to be somewhat disjointed, even haphazard type of syllabus specification. While there has been increasing evidence of attention to vocabulary and discourse features and increased evidence of the inclusion of a variety of task types, the publishers of commercially available general English textbooks appear to have shown little enthusiasm for textbooks whose syllabuses are exclusively lexical, task-based or relational in orientation.

7.2.1.2 English for Academic Purposes (EAP) textbooks

The textbooks included in this section of the thesis were: *Academic encounters: Life in society* (Brown & Hood, 2008); *Academic writing course: Study skills in English* (Jordan, 2002); *Writing academic English* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991); *Making connections: A strategic approach to academic reading* (Pakenham, 2005); *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (Swales & Feak, 1994); *English in today's research world* (Swales & Feak, 2000); and *Writers at work: The essay* (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmiz, 2008). Almost all of them are predicated on the assumption that the students for whom they are intended will already have a reasonably firm grasp of English. Most focus on writing. All except one (*Academic encounters: Life in society*) are intended for use by students from a range of academic disciplines.

Both *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (Swales & Feak, 1994) and *English in today's research world* (Swales & Feak, 2000) include sections dealing with the relationship between audience, purpose and authorial positioning. Both, in focusing on discourse modes (largely *classification/description* and *argument*, but

also including *recount*, *explanation* and *instruction*), highlight generic cross-disciplinary organizational structures (general/ particular and problem/solution), vocabulary typically used in academic contexts, cohesive devices that link various types of relation between clauses and sentences, and a number of aspects of clause/ sentence level structure as well as a range of skills and sub-skills. However, whereas the first includes a focus on summaries, critiques and research papers as text-types, the second is more specifically oriented towards abstracts and conference posters and literature reviews. In both cases, the underlying syllabus is primarily discourse-based, being made up of a blend of a number of cross-disciplinary rhetorical, lexical, grammatical and cohesive aspects of coherent texts exhibited within the context of a variety of discourse modes and a more limited range of text-types, with, in addition, some contextualized consideration of clause-level grammar. This is also generally true of *Academic writing course: Study skills in English* (Jordan, 2002), in which, however, although the underlying syllabus design principles are very similar, some categorical confusion results in a less clearly organized and coherent syllabus.

In common with the three books already discussed, *Writing academic English* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991) includes a focus on cohesive devices and is oriented towards cross-disciplinary aspects of text construction. There are, however, some major differences in focus, with a greater emphasis in this case on paragraph construction, a primary orientation towards a single text-type (the academic essay), and, in terms of internal structuring, towards two discourse modes - *classification/ description* and *argument*. While the underlying syllabus design principles are clearly, once again, discourse-centred, significant problems relating to the absence of any explicit reference to overall rhetorical structuring of texts and the lack of adequate discrimination among various rhetorical and semantico-pragmatic categories and the different semantic functions of various cohesive devices results in a rather confused and disjointed syllabus.

In the case of *Writers at work: The essay* (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmiz, 2008), which, in common with *Writing academic English* focuses on a single text-type (the essay), there is also clear evidence of an underlying syllabus that is

essentially discourse-centred. However, also, as in the case of *Writing academic English*, the absence of any explicit reference to the overall rhetorical structuring of texts, combined with a considerable amount of categorical confusion, leads to a number of serious inconsistencies and contradictions that result, once again, in a syllabus that is characterized by an overall lack of theoretical coherence.

Unlike the other textbooks discussed in this section, *Making connections* (Pakenham, 2005) has a primary focus on reading, each unit including texts that are thematically linked. In addition, however, to its extensive treatment of reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, it includes an extensive discourse-based component, the primary focus of that component being cross-disciplinary lexical, grammatical and cohesive aspects of coherent texts exhibited within the context of a variety of discourse modes. There is, however, once again (as in the case of *Writing academic English* and *Writers at work: The essay*), a focus on a single text-type and (as in the case of several of the works to which reference has been made) no explicit reference is made to the overall rhetorical structuring of texts.

Academic encounters: Life in society (Brown & Hood, 2008) focuses on a single text-type, that is, mini academic articles in the area of sociology and largely on a single genre, *description/ classification* (although it does include some texts/ text segments that combine *description/ classification* and *recount*). There is no discussion of overall rhetorical structuring, very limited reference to types of cohesion, little attempt to link semantic relational occurrence, co-occurrence and encoding to either genre or text-type, and a lack of any clear distinction between genres and types of paragraph. Overall, the syllabus underpinning this textbook appears to be largely oriented towards some of the sub-skills involved in reading, with particular reference to reading texts exhibiting a particular text-type (academic articles) in a particular discipline area (sociology). However, although the texts included largely exhibit *classification/description* or a combination of *classification/ description* and *recount*, few of the insights into the characteristic features of these genres that are available in research in the area of discourse analysis are drawn upon.

The overall approach to the design of the syllabuses underpinning commercially available EAP textbooks appears to be very different from those underpinning GE textbooks. In this case, with some exceptions in which skills and sub-skills are prioritized, the underlying syllabus design principles appear generally to be largely discourse-based', with a primary focus on cohesive devices that link various types of relation between clauses and sentences and, to various extents and in varying combinations, paragraphing, generic cross-disciplinary organizational structures (e.g. general/ particular and problem/solution) and various text-types (with or without consideration being given to the overall rhetorical structuring that characterizes them) and discourse modes (with or without consideration being given to the internal relational structuring that characterizes them). This may be supplemented by a focus on vocabulary typically used in academic contexts, a contextualized approach to aspects of clause/ sentence level structure, and a range of skills and sub-skills, resulting in a blended syllabus, but one that is fundamentally different in terms of overall focus, organization and content from the type of blended syllabus that now generally characterizes the design of General English language textbooks. It is important to add, however, category confusion in the area of discourse appears often to result, in the case of EAP textbooks, in syllabuses that are, to varying degrees, confused and disjointed and lacking in overall theoretical coherence

7.3 Limitations of the research

7.3.1 The surveys: The cohort

The decision to include, in the interviews, only language programme managers/ teacher co-ordinators who were operating in the tertiary education sector in a single country - New Zealand - was made after the questionnaire-based survey was completed. In retrospect, I believe it would have been better, for the sake of overall consistency and comparability, to have also included only those operating in the tertiary education context in New Zealand in the questionnaire-based survey. However, that would have meant that the total number of potential participants was relatively small. There were, in fact, thirty seven (37) New Zealand-based participants. In the event, however, on those few occasions where there were detectable differences between the responses of participants operating

in New Zealand and those operating in Taiwan, Japan and Syria, the New Zealand participant response pattern was very similar to that of participants based in Australia. I have, therefore, wherever there were such differences, indicated the difference in response between the Australian and New Zealand participants combined and the other participants.

7.3.2 The surveys: Naming syllabus design approaches

At the beginning of this research project, I made a decision not to refer directly by name, in either the questionnaire or the interviews, to any particular approach to language syllabus design, preferring to elicit participants' views towards particular approaches more indirectly. There were two main reasons for this. First, it seemed possible that research participants who were aware of some of existing critiques of some of these approaches in the academic literature might feel inhibited about expressing their own views concerning them. Secondly, it seemed likely that research participants who were wholly unfamiliar with some of the proposed approaches and/or who believed that their understanding of the details of one or more of them was limited might be inhibited about expressing any views at all about syllabus design even though they may have learned about approaches in indirect ways and may have relevant practical experience. In retrospect, I realize that much could have been gained from introducing syllabus design approaches by name towards the end of interviews and possibly also towards the end of the questionnaire. It would then have been possible to compare participants' views about course and programme content with their responses to questions about particular, named approaches to syllabus design.

7.3.3 Textbook analysis: Selection and approach to series

My initial intention was to ask research participants which textbooks they used and to focus the textbook analysis section only on those to which they referred. I decided against this because (a) it would not have allowed for a historical perspective, and (b) it might lead to the omission of some current textbooks that are widely used in contexts other than those in which the participants were operating. This created a problem in relation to the rationale for textbook selection. An obvious rationale would have been sales volume. However, sales volume figures are not publicly available and issues relating to commercial

sensitivity would almost certainly have ensured that some, possibly all, publishers would have been unwilling to make them available to me for research purposes. I therefore decided to focus on textbooks produced by major publishing houses in the U.K. or U.S.A. which were advertised as being widely used, were associated in the academic literature with the early stages of particular innovations in syllabus design or were written by the proposers of particular approaches to syllabus design. Although I realise that this is not an entirely satisfactory rationale for the selection of textbooks for analysis, I was unable to come up with a better one.

Another issue relating to textbook analysis which is problematic is my decision, in the case of textbook series, to focus primarily on a single volume in each series. While it would have been preferable to examine all volumes in detail, providing an overview of the content of each series at all levels, I found it impossible to do so in the time available and therefore decided that this was something that could be done as a separate, but linked project on completion of the PhD research.

7.4 The research contribution

As Candlin (1987, p. 32) has maintained, it is by no means a straightforward matter "to separate . . . what we might have been calling content from what we have been calling method or procedure". This has not, however, prevented researchers from conducting research that focuses largely on methodology. Indeed, there is a great deal of research, particularly in the area of language teacher cognition, that aims to determine what impact, if any, developments in language teaching methodology have had on language teachers, curriculum developers and textbook writers in various parts of the world. There appears, however, to be considerably less research that focuses on the impact (direct and/or indirect) on English language teachers and textbook writers of developments in the area of L2 syllabus design. This may be, in part, because some applied linguists have implied that any attempt to make some distinction between syllabus and methodology is largely misguided: "[If] we see curriculum planning as an integrated set of processes . . . the argument over whether the design and development of tasks belongs to syllabus design or to methodology becomes unimportant" (Nunan, 1989, p. 1).

Nunan (1988, p. 5) has also referred to what he terms "a broad and narrow approach to syllabus design":

The narrow view draws a clear distinction between syllabus design and methodology. Syllabus design is seen as being concerned essentially with the selection and grading of content, while methodology is concerned with the selection of learning tasks and activities. Those who adopt a broader view question this strict separation, arguing that with the advent of communicative language teaching the distinction between content and tasks is difficult to sustain.

Nunan's terminology ('narrow' versus 'broad') is clearly intended to stigmatize those who adhere to the former view. The fact is, however, that it is perfectly possible to make a distinction between syllabus and methodology (if not necessarily always a clear-cut one) and many do, as evidenced in, for example, the development of Reference Level Descriptions (to which reference has been made at several points throughout this thesis).

Since the mid-20th century, there have been a number of different proposals concerning the design of L2 syllabuses and that there has also been a considerable body of academic literature that, either directly or indirectly, impacts on L2 syllabus design, including a number of publications associated with the work of the Council of Europe. I believe that it is as important to seek to determine the extent to which this has impacted on the beliefs and practices of English language teachers and textbook writers as it is to seek to determine the impact that research and development in the area of L2 methodology has had on them.

This thesis makes a contribution in the area of applied linguistics and second language teaching by:

- clarifying the different ways in which the writers of a sample of widely used, commercially available textbooks (some focusing on General English; some on English in Academic Contexts) have approached the

issue of syllabus design and the extent to which these approaches appear to have drawn upon research and development in linguistics, discourse analysis, psychology, second language acquisition and, in particular, syllabus design; and

- determining some of the ways in which a sample of English language teachers and programme managers/ co-ordinators approach issues relating to the determination of the content of their courses and programmes and the extent to which the approaches they adopt appear to be informed by (a) relevant research and development, and (b) the textbooks that are available to them.

7.5 A final comment

So far as the design of syllabuses for additional languages is concerned, we have, I believe, come a long way from the time when I was forced to learn Afrikaans at school, a time when the core component of language syllabuses was largely structurally based (with an emphasis on decontextualized clauses and sentences), a time when the ability to transfer reading and writing skills from one's first language was simply assumed. Even so, I believe that we still have a very long way to go before the confusion and uncertainty that currently characterize the area are resolved and we can be confident that the changes that have taken place amount to genuine progress.

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**Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Teachers of English as an
Additional Language and covering letter**

Questionnaire for Teachers of English as an Additional Language

Information about the attached questionnaire

This Questionnaire is designed for teachers of English as an additional language. It is part of a research project that I am conducting for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Waikato in New Zealand.

The overall aim of this part of the research project is to find out how English teaching staff organise and plan their courses.

Although I would be very grateful for responses to this questionnaire, you should not feel obliged to complete it. If you *do* decide to complete the questionnaire, you should not feel obliged to answer every question if you would prefer not to (although I hope that you will).

The part of my research that relates to this questionnaire involves reporting on trends - not on specific individuals or specific institutions. So you are NOT asked to provide your name or the name of any institution where you work. If you complete all or part of the questionnaire, the information you provide will be included in my thesis and in any publications relating to my thesis as part of a report on the responses to the questionnaire.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the questionnaire, please feel free to contact me. My name and contact details are provided below.

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Questionnaire for Teachers of English as an Additional Language

Please tick \surd the appropriate box.

1. Do you currently teach English to:

- a. students who currently live permanently or semi-permanently in a country where English is the first language
- b. students who currently live in a country where English is not the first language

2. How long have you taught English as an additional language?

- a. between one and five years
- b. between six and ten years
- c. between eleven and fifteen years
- d. between sixteen and twenty years
- e. over twenty years

3. Do you teach a core language development course (that is, a course where the focus is on overall language development rather than a specific skill)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

4. Are you **more** or **less** confident now about what you should teach in a core language development course than you were when you began teaching?

- a. more confident
- b. less confident
- c. about the same

Feel free to add comments here:

5. Do you teach any skill – specific courses (e.g., reading skills, writing skills)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

6. Are you **more** or **less** confident now about what you should teach in a writing course than you were when you began teaching?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

Feel free to add comments here:

7. Do you think the changes that have taken place in relation to **methodology** in English language teaching over the past twenty years have generally led to more relaxed and confident learners?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

8. Do you think the changes that have taken place in relation to **syllabus design** in English language teaching over the past twenty years have generally led to increased standards of proficiency among learners?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I'm not sure

Feel free to add comments here:

9. Which of the following statements do you believe to be true?

	True	Not true	Not relevant in my situation
It's best to be clear about what you want to teach in each lesson before you begin although you may have to adapt in response to the students' ability to cope.			
It's best not to plan too much in advance so that you can respond to student needs as they arise.			
It's best to structure lessons around tasks that involve language rather than structuring lessons around specific language that you want to teach.			
It's best to structure lessons around the specific language that you want to teach rather than around tasks, although tasks should be included in lessons.			
I think it is very important to have a syllabus for each course that I teach.			
I choose textbooks after I have decided on my syllabus and these textbooks reflect my syllabus.			
I select interesting textbooks at an appropriate level for my students and they determine the syllabus.			
At beginner and elementary level, I prefer to focus on words and sentences rather than on larger stretches of language. This makes it easier for students to cope.			

10. Do you have a choice about the textbooks that you use for your course?

a. Yes

b. No

11. If you answered **YES** to question (10) above, which of the following statements is true in your case?

	TRUE	NOT TRUE
My choice of textbooks relates mainly to whether I think my students will enjoy the activities they contain. The language content is less important.		
My choice of textbooks relates mainly to whether they cover the language I want to cover in my class. I can adapt the activities.		

Feel free to add comments here:

12. Which of the following would you include in a core language development course (i.e., see earlier) Put a tick ✓ in the appropriate boxes. *Note that the focus is on lesson content rather than methodology.*

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Vocabulary				
Language structures				
Tasks				
Activities				
Learning strategies				
Cohesive devices (e.g., “because”)				
The types of link between clauses and sentences (e.g., comparison, contrast, example)				

13. When - if at all – would you introduce each of the following?

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Comparing and contrasting (e.g., <i>He's ..and/but she's...</i>)				
Concession (e.g., <i>Although....</i>)				
Purpose (e.g., <i>She used a key to open the door.</i>)				
Ellipsis (e.g. <i>A: Did he laugh? B: Yes</i>)				
Substitution (e.g., <i>He's... and so is she.</i>)				
Reasons signalled by "because"				
Reasons signalled by "because of"				
Reasons signalled by "so"				
Results signalled by "therefore"				
Reasons that are not explicitly signalled (e.g., <i>He took an umbrella. It was wet.</i>)				
A combination of reasons and conditions (e.g., <i>If he....he will... because...</i>)				
Choices (e.g., <i>apples or oranges</i>)				
Temporal sequence (e.g., <i>He....(then)...</i>)				

14. Which of the following genres do you think should be included at each of the levels indicated?

	Beginner	Elementary	Intermediate	Advanced
Recount				
Narrative				
Instruction				
Argument				
Report				
Explanation				
Description				

Feel free to add comments here:

15. Are you responsible for a reading course at your institution?

a. Yes

b. No

16. If you are responsible for a reading course at your institution, would you be aware in a detailed way of the content of any writing course that the same students were taking in the same year?

a. Yes

b. No

c. In part

17. Are you responsible for a writing course at your institution?

a. Yes

b. No

18. If you are responsible for a writing course at your institution, would you be aware in a detailed way of the content of any reading course that the same students were taking in the same year?

a. Yes

b. No

c. In part

Feel free to add comments here about Questions 15-18:

19. If you answered **YES** to question (16) or (18) above, would you try to make sure that the two courses related directly to one another?

a. Yes

b. No

c. In part

Feel free to add comments here:

20. If you answered YES to Question (16) or (18) above, **HOW** would you set about trying to make sure that the two courses related directly to one another?

21. If you had an opportunity to attend in-service course, which of the following do you think would be useful for you? Tick as many boxes as you wish.

- a. Class management
- b. Syllabus design
- c. Materials design
- d. Technology (computers, multimedia, etc.)
- e. Testing and evaluation
- f. Skills-related teaching
- g. Grammar teaching
- h. Communicative teaching
- i. Other/s (please specify below)

22. Does the institution where you work have an overall curriculum for the English courses it offers (showing, for example, the relationship between each of these courses in terms of level and specific content, and including reference to methodology and materials)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

Feel free to add comments here:

23. Do you think that all of the English courses that a student takes in any particular year should be clearly related to one another?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

Feel free to add comments here:

24. Do you think that it is important to have an explicit syllabus document for each course?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

Feel free to add comments here:

25. If there are syllabus documents designed by your institution for the use at the level you teach, how useful do you find them? **Please tick only one box.**

- a. Essential
- b. Very useful
- c. Useful
- d. Not very useful
- e. Not useful at all

Feel free to make any comments:

26. If you are NOT provided with a syllabus document for a course that you have been asked to teach, what do you do? **Please tick as appropriate.**

- a. Prepare one yourself for your own use.
- b. Prepare one yourself for your own use and give a copy to students
- c. Allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeds
- d. Focus on material and methodology rather than syllabus
- e. Other (please specify below)

Feel free to make any comments:

27. If you were asked to provide a list of the expected **SPECIFIC OUTCOMES** of each of your English courses (that is, a list of what students can do in English as a result of the course), could you do it?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

Feel free to make any comments:

28. If you answered YES to Question (27) above, please give the year and type of one of your courses (e.g. Year 1: General English) and list one specific outcome that relates to that course.

Year and type of course:

One outcome:

29. How do you decide what to teach in each of your courses? (Please tick the appropriate box or boxes below)

- a. The institution where I work has a printed syllabus for each course
- b. I meet with other teachers each year and we decide what to include
- c. I ask the teachers who taught the course in the previous year
- d. I just decide what I think would be best to include
- e. I select a textbook or parts of a textbook that I think would be appropriate
- f. Other/s (please specify below)

Feel free to make any comments:

30. If you use a textbook from a particular series (e.g. American Streamline) with a group of first year students, would you select the next highest level textbook from the same series for the same students when they are in their second year?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

Feel free to make any comments:

31. If you answered **NO** or **IDON'T KNOW** to Question (30) above, why would you /might you change to a different series? Please provide a reason or reasons below.

32. Which aspects of discourse do you think are important to include in your courses. Please list three.

33. Do you have any other comments you wish to add? If so, please write your comments below.

☺ **Thank you very much for your participation** ☺

Appendix 2: Comments added by questionnaire respondents

Table 1: Comments relating to Question 4 (relating to confidence about the content of core development courses)

Comment types	Comments⁸⁶
Comments relating to the positive impact of experience or study (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have learnt a lot since I started teaching ESL.</i> • Experience helps me understand better. • <i>I'm more confident about what I think should be taught, but it is not necessarily what is prescribed.</i> • After these years one can decide whether any 'language' or type of exercise would be useful as per of the course, whether it's useful in the particular situation of the student's country – mother tongue, or even the timing of the introduction of the particular item/ language in the course. • <i>University X courses helped a lot. PG Diploma and Masters</i>
Comments relating to what is actually taught (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses I teach mostly aim at developing reading comprehension skills. However, students' work includes speaking and writing. • The courses in our school are not 4 skill combined. Therefore, there are some limitations in teaching. • I'm teaching a course with a focus on two skills (reading and writing) and speaking and listening will be integrating. • I teach a mixture of classes, both core & skill courses. Skill – reading & writing – core – content course on tourism and World Englishes • Although the course is taught in terms of a specific skill or at most 2 skills in combination as the course title specified, the teaching is an integrated skill style with more % on the course title e.g., listening & writing
Other comments (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More knowledge but with more knowledge has come more questions.</i> • <i>My views are continually challenged by my peers.</i> • I am teaching now at the elementary level so the following answers will correspond to that level.

⁸⁶ Comments by those teaching in New Zealand or Australia are indicated by italic print.

Table 2: Comments relating to Question 6 (confidence about the content of writing courses)

Comment types	Comments
Comments relating to the positive impact of experience or study (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am more confident</i> • I don't currently teach writing, I teach reading & oral communication. I taught writing 2 yrs ago and my confidence certainly grew over the time I taught [with an example provided]. • I've taught academic writing, which I'm quite confident with, but I also realise there are other genre that may be more useful to many students. • <i>As from teaching theory or syllabus documents. - I have experienced myself the skills needed by my students</i> • I didn't feel confident until I tried writing courses at different levels (from basic to advanced levels). • <i>I felt like I was faking it a bit until I did the courses at X university.</i> • <i>My confidence comes as much from having studied courses at university.</i> • Also have become conscious of the difficulty facing students in their writing because of applying their own grammar in the English sentences.
Comment relating to less confidence (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But the students' motivations deteriorate the teachers' confidence.
Other comments (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not skill specific exactly, but weighted towards academic writing.</i> • <i>Sometimes afternoon classes have involved two skills e.g. Reading and Writing.</i> • Students need more practice of grammar usage. • Writing & translation are so directly tied to mother tongue spoken by students & consequently to the way. . . • Although my Masters didn't help much • In my experience so far, I have taught very little writing.

Table 3: Comments relating to Question 7 (relationship between changes in methodology and learners being more relaxed and confident) and Question 8 (relationship between changes in syllabus design and proficiency gains)

Comment types	Comments
Comment referring to a specific syllabus type (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes - especially negotiated syllabus
Comments relating to length of teaching experience impacting on response (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I recently returned to EAL teaching.</i> • I'm not sure because of my short and limited teaching experience. • <i>I wasn't teaching 20 years ago. My guess is yes to both.</i> • Not having being teaching 20 years ago, I can't really compare.
Comments relating to difficulty of making an informed decision (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do we rate that?</i> • This means that I read all the research in this field, which I do not. • No one seems qualified to answer 7 and 8 – question is not scientific. • I was tempted to answer 'yes' to the above questions, but I do have my doubts. • Yes- depends on how you define 'proficiency' communicatively.
Comments relating to specific aspects of language and/or language use (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More proficient in speaking and less proficient in grammar.</i> • <i>Yes - in terms of communicative ability, not necessarily in vocabulary or grammar use knowledge & control.</i>
Comments referring to methodology rather than syllabus design or to both (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxed probably, confident - not sure • <i>External pressures on students (for e.g. IELTS) may mean that learners are actually less relaxed and confident than in the past.</i> • <i>On q. 7 – depending on the background of the learners. Learners from Confucian- based educational environments sometimes take a while to be comfortable in a modern communicative classroom environment.</i> • Yes competence-wise: not necessarily
Other comments (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All 4 skills are addressed.</i> • There is more focus on speaking and listening than just textbooks study and memorisation. Teachers must include more information than just page from textbooks- make it more relevant. • <i>At TAFE etc. too much time is spent meeting standards, not enough time teaching</i> • For us, we need a team and a leader to teach us 'syllabus design' and also carry on the idea in our courses. • The requirements made by MOE somehow restricted our syllabus design (number of hours, subjects etc.) • Sorry I know quite a little about syllabus design.

Table 4: Comments relating to Question 11 (whether textbook choice relates mainly to student enjoyment of activities included or to language to be covered)

Comment types	Comments
Response indicating that both language goals and student interest impact on textbook selection (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • true for both – both language & tasks complement each other – not one or the other.
Response relating to content coverage content. (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am very much focused on covering content. We typically don't play a lot of games in my classes. Sometimes but not always.
Responses indicating uncertainty about researcher's use of terminology (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I need researcher to define tasks and activities. Are they exercises?</i> • <i>I am having a little trouble differentiating between tasks /activities</i>
Responses relating to use of own materials, with or without textbooks (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The material needs to be at the right level, I don't always use textbooks – I make my own material or use authentic articles etc.</i> • <i>I choose not to use textbooks for both copyright and needs reasons.</i> • <i>I don't like or use textbooks in my EAP class – my materials come from real NZ texts. I adapt accordingly.</i> • <i>Not true for both – this is tough to answer. I use a mixture of texts, adapt them & am currently writing my own.</i> • <i>I generally create my own materials, so textbook choice is not an issue for me.</i>
Response relating to the necessity of having a syllabus (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I taught on a course during the year with no syllabus, no marking criteria etc., and found it difficult to know what was expected of me, of the students, or even what the learning outcomes were.</i>

Table 5: Number of years of teaching in relation to inclusion of cohesive devices in a core course at different levels

Content		Beginner		Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Include cohesive devices?	Overall	33/90	37%	72/90	80%	83/90	92%	72/90	82%
	Teaching over 20 years	3/8	37.5%	6/8	75%	8/8	100%	5/8	62.5%
	Teaching between 16 and 20 years	4/11	36%	9/11	82%	10/11	91%	8/11	73%
	Teaching between 11 and 15 years	8/16	50%	15/16	94%	14/16	87.5%	14/16	87.5%
	Teaching between 6 and 10 years	8/32	25%	23/32	72%	29/32	91%	26/32	81%
	Teaching between 1 and 5 years	10/23	43.5%	19/23	83%	22/23	96%	19/23	83%
Include types of link between clauses and sentences	Overall	12/90	13%	40/90	44%	86/90	96%	84/90	94%
	Teaching over 20 years	1/8	12.5%	5/8	62.5%	8/8	100%	5/8	62.5%
	Teaching between 16 and 20 years	1/11	9%	3/11	27%	11/11	100%	11/11	100%
	Teaching between 11 and 15 years	5/16	31%	8/16	50%	16/16	100%	15/16	94%
	Teaching between 6 and 10 years	2/32	6%	18/32	56%	31/32	97%	30/32	94%
	Teaching between 1 and 5 years	3/23	13%	6/23	26%	20/23	87%	23/23	100%

Table 6: Number of years of teaching in relation to levels at which respondents would introduce various aspects of coherence and cohesion

		Beginner		Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Comparing and contrasting (e.g., <i>He's ..and/but she's...</i>)	Overall	24/91	26.4%	54/91	59.3%	30/91	33%	15/91	16.5%
	Teaching over 20 years	2/8	25%	6/8	75%	3/8	37.5%	1/8	12.5%
	Teaching between 16 and 20 years	4/11	36.4%	6/11	54.5%	3/11	27.3%	1/11	9.1%
	Teaching between 11 and 15 years	8/16	50%	9/16	56.3%	3/16	18.8%	0/16	0%
	Teaching between 6 and 10 years	5/32	15.6%	20/32	62.5%	12/32	37.5%	8/32	25%
	Teaching between 1 and 5 years	5/24	20.8%	13/24	54.2%	9/24	37.5%	5/24	20.8%

Table 7: Comments on genre selection

Comment types	
Responses relating to each genre being included or recycled at all levels (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Even though most levels to do the same things, the depth of the understanding and ability is different.</i> • <i>I really struggle to answer this. Each should be included at all levels, but should be at the students' level. Sorry if this doesn't help.</i> • <i>Once introduced they should be revisited at higher levels and compared to highlight different features.</i> • <i>Most can be taught at all levels – but some are easier to teach at higher levels. All can be more/less sophisticated depending on language used.</i> • <i>At each level the genre can become more complex</i> • <i>The above types can be introduced in a simple, basic style and can also be a more complicated style.</i>
Responses relating to specific genre choices (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Narrative – pre-intermediate level</i> • <i>Description - Good for beginners because it relates closely to the psychological 'here and now' i.e. an accessible mental world. However, it is probably not a very useful genre.</i> • <i>I think narrative is something we see in stories, reading, (fiction). I'm a big supporter of Reading. So, I like this at all levels. Argument and explanation in academic writing are key...advanced levels.</i>
Responses relating to levels respondents are teaching (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I rarely teach beginner or elementary so my knowledge in these areas is 'off the top of my head'.</i> • <i>I have answered by grade level of an ESL elementary school</i> • <i>I left this blank because I rarely deal with intermediate and advanced learners.</i> • <i>I'm really not sure. I've only taught from intermediate onwards.</i>
Responses indicating confusion about researcher's use of terminology (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Is this a business report?</i> • <i>Definition for these words would help to answer this question.</i> • <i>In this and previous question all depends on how one defines these terms e.g. 'purpose' 'narrative' report etc. for example does report mean all kinds of reporting in English, including journalism. Or just some 'reported speech'.</i>
Other (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think what matters is the degree of expertise or skill demanded rather than the genre in itself.</i>

Table 8: Comments relating to skills-based courses and their interaction

Comment types	Comments
Responses related to the combination of reading and writing in the same course (19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reading and writing combined (x15)</i> • The Reading and Writing parts of the course are implemented by the class teacher. • <i>The four skills combined (x4)</i> • <i>I teach both courses.</i>
Responses relating to reading and writing being taught separately (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't have a writing course in the 3rd year. • I teach lower levels reading classes. But upper level writing classes. Input at early years. Output in later years. • In the past, when I did teach writing (& reading) they were completely unrelated.
Other (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our department, the teacher teaching the same subject work together to decide the course aims and the textbook. A teacher is responsible for a particular subject when she works as the coordinator or is the only person teaching that subject. • This information is not available or shared

Table 9: Comments relating to the integration of reading and writing courses

Comment types	Comments
Comments relating to the linking of reading and writing (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If I had answered yes to Question 16 and 18, I would also answer yes to this.</i> • <i>Reading texts can provide models for writing (not always). Reading texts can provide content material for writing tasks. Reading and writing are inextricably linked.</i> • <i>Reading courses enable the analysis (for writing) to take place.</i> • In our course design, we teach reading and writing at the same time in the same class. • Reading and writing are obviously related. • I would always try where possible to relate courses to one another.
Comments relating to curriculum issues (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfortunately, the college students in Taiwan spend less time on reading than the students 10 years ago. Therefore these two highly related skills have largely weakened.

Table 10: Comments relating to ways of integrating reading and writing courses

Comment types	Comments
Using reading texts as model texts for writing (15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use reading for writing (eg. Models/ ideas for writing)</i> • <i>Teach reading skills related to the texts students study.</i> • <i>Students have input and usually then create a similar text.</i> • <i>Use reading texts directly for writing e.g., study order of paragraphs (ordering ex., linking words, topic sentences etc. – mirror writing. Write a similar text in a slightly different topic.</i> • <i>Example. authentic reading materials for prompts for essay writing. The students would read and write (attempt to write) the same genres.</i> • <i>If I were responsible I would try to make sure that the reading content related to Writing. Genre and topics. Selecting Reading on a theme and Writing on related topics. Write model or example texts of what I expected learners to produce.</i> • <i>Making sure content & skills are related.</i> • <i>They also read and analyse the same genre that they write in.</i> • <i>Reading texts are models for writing.</i> • <i>Read and summarise. Read and rewrite in own words.</i> • <i>Yes, usually by genre type</i> • <i>Genre type</i> • <i>While reading, students are asked to analyse the texts, identifying topic sentence, details, concluding sentence, transition or types of texts.etc.</i> • <i>I'd have students practice the genre and style in the reading.</i> • <i>Link by themes/genres/vocabulary/grammar, same teachers or at least high level of coordination between the two teachers, reading naturally leads to writing. Students look at model texts & then are helped to reproduce them.</i>
Using reading as a basis for research for writing (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Part of research for writing tasks.</i> • <i>Read for information to use in an essay.</i> • <i>Read articles as part of intensive reading & then write based on these articles. Also, for extensive reading, tasks are linked between courses.</i>
Linking reading and writing by topics and vocabulary (21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By using similar topics and contexts.</i> • <i>I teach in topics and make reading/ writing/ vocabulary acquisition dovetailed.</i> • <i>Linking topic areas to enable reading input to be exploited in writing tasks.</i> • <i>Link tasks, pre teach vocabulary, reuse vocabulary. maintain/ keep themes.</i> • <i>Content, vocabulary, grammar –all related.</i> • <i>-Same course/ same content related goals</i> • <i>As stated above, both skills are taught at our institution. I agree with this and in each unit students both read and write about the same topic with some common use of vocab. and structures.</i> • <i>Interrelationship can take many forms.</i> • <i>Topic in common (indirect relationship)</i> • <i>Yes, usually by topic</i> • <i>Topic – vocabulary and form</i> • <i>Reading provides the content, vocabulary, structures for</i>

	<p>writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would try to make the content of teaching and tasks relevant. For example, I would be teaching outlining for a reading passage and then ask students to do outlining before they write their compositions. • Designing the writing materials and tasks related to the topic of and focuses structures in the reading texts. • Then they will be asked to write on a similar topic and produce a new outline and write paragraph (s) or essay(s). • Similar structures and vocabulary (similar topics) • Check the content of the reading course • Coordination of subject matter and review/introduction of new language points. • Comprehensive exercises units covering a topic including all areas of the language teaching. • Put the topic on the language features in the discussion activity or make it as a reference in the learning tasks so that learners are aware of the link between courses. • Similar topics and vocabulary. So that they link together.
<p>Importance of liaison between teachers (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talk to other teachers.</i> • <i>liaise with teacher of the other programme</i>
<p>Other links suggested (8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the textbook that contains 4 skills altogether. • Using the same textbook that has both reading and writing components. • One way is to teach the two courses at the same time in two separate classes or in an integrated course. • We combine <i>reading and writing</i> so they are taught in one course. • As mentioned above, we prepare the material for both at the same time and use the writing material which is designed by the publisher that fits the reading content. • I try to make sure that what they're reading is reinforced in their writing that they are doing. It can be difficult with younger learners as their reading level is usually a lot higher than their writing level. • Write responses to the reading. Write about the characters etc. • <i>Combined classes - easy to relate it directly. In a different case the design of syllabus should complement each other (reading and writing).</i>

Table 11: Comments relating to institutional curricula

Comment types	Comments (total = 21)
Responses that indicate inadequate/incomplete or unhelpful curriculum documents (CD) (14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Some, but not too great!</i> • <i>Yes, but not sure how useful it really is!</i> • <i>Not so much information on the methodology and materials</i> • <i>It does have descriptors of criteria for a certificate at each level (4 levels). And each course has a set of objectives.</i> • <i>It did before (but not reference to methodology and materials) but recent changes have been made on an individual course basis without looking at the whole</i> • <i>Not in huge detail</i> • <i>We have a general overall curriculum in which specific course description and its objectives are stated. However, it doesn't contain such details as specific content or methodology.</i> • <i>We have syllabi for each course also weekly schedules, textbook provided, but not reference to methodology and materials.</i> • <i>We do have an overall curriculum but it's vague and does not specify methodology and does not provide specific examples of the vocabulary, related grammar that each level should am at.</i> • <i>Yes it does, but I personally feel curriculum objectives and the goals – specific- could be much better stated.</i> • <i>Different textbooks levels are geared towards different courses/ students' levels, but there is not an overall structured curriculum. Textbooks and/or materials are chosen based on the level of the students.</i> • <i>1st year classes do to a limited degree. 2nd through 4th do not</i> • <i>Yes, to an extent – the curriculum has evolved at different times and rates in different skills areas. Skills are not fully integrated.</i> • <i>Yes- Although vague in some aspects (e.g relationship between levels & specific language content) there is extensive methodology & materials explanation.</i> • <i>I thought we had one but it doesn't seem to reveal the relationship in terms of methodology</i>
Responses indicating that CD design is in progress (2 out of 21 responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In progress at present. At present we have outcomes and assessments for each course in the syllabus.</i> • <i>The school is new so the curriculum is being developed.</i>
Responses related to not having seen CD (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have said "yes" because we are told that it does, but I have not seen it.</i> • <i>I have been here only three weeks</i> • <i>If so, it is not shared or explained.</i>
Other (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am old! Sometimes one feels one has seen it all!</i> • <i>Each teacher does his/her own thing. As an elementary school teacher we are trained to teach lang., but with the changes in technology, that would be one thing to update regularly on.</i>

Table 12: Comments relating to whether all of the courses taken by a student in a particular year should be related to one another

Comment types	Comments
Comments relating to students' needs and expectations (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Depends on students, expectations, ability etc.</i> • <i>Students should be able to choose a course that suits their needs. Pre-course interviews are important.</i> • <i>Courses should build on one another so students can make progress. Exception- students who fail should ideally be able to repeat a level using new material.</i> • <i>Courses should be taken based on their relevance to students' needs, not each other.</i> • <i>Not necessarily – how they are related just as much depends on the individual student's perspective and goals.</i>
Comments indicating a positive response to course integration (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Courses should be complementary.</i> • <i>Yes- I am not sure about 'clearly' but they should be related.</i> • <i>yes- as much as is feasible, integration is positive.</i>
Comments indicating that course integration is not always necessary or desirable (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ideally each course will build on previous courses, but I don't see a need for there always to be such a link e.g. academic courses followed by IELTS /TOEFL preparation courses.</i> • <i>In the lower levels, but not in the intermediate or above levels.</i> • <i>Not necessarily. At a parallel level usually, but not directly related.</i>
Comments indicating a perceived lack of clarity in the question (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why should it be in any particular year?</i> • <i>Not sure I understand this</i>
Comments providing reasons for negative responses (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>That would be impossible on a micro level.</i> • <i>English for Academic Purposes would not necessarily have to relate to an ESP course or a speaking skills course at a low level.</i> • <i>A student may decide to do IELTS or Business English. And it would be very hard to relate these specifically</i> • <i>I think that this would take a lot of coordination among teachers. In a very large Department - almost impossible. Materials would have to be developed not using commercial books, impractical here.</i>

Table 13: Comments about beliefs relating to the need, or otherwise, for explicit syllabus documents

Comment types	Comments
Comments relating to learner needs (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meet learner need</i> • <i>Course outlines of objectives should be given to the students.</i> • <i>It would be good to give students some more clarity & direction. However, students who study abroad and those who don't make the levels in the class very apparent and slightly harder to teach.</i> • <i>Both teacher and student know about the process of the course through the semester.</i>
Comments relating to issues of consistency and clarity (13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>However, as long as core courses are defined – to give consistency and structure extra/spontaneous/one offs can be less structured (and depend more on student needs at the time).</i> • <i>With the view that things may have to be adapted.</i> • <i>So there is consistency in what various teachers in the same course are teaching.</i> • <i>Explicit is good – know where you stand. Does not need to control how it is to be taught or the materials to be used but inexperienced or busy teachers often find this helpful.</i> • <i>Especially for teachers new to the programme who might not be aware of how the course runs, what is usually covered etc.</i> • <i>It serves as a guideline for teachers and students- to set and assess teaching and learning goals.</i> • <i>Guidelines/an outline would be enough but it would be more helpful to have explicit syllabus.</i> • <i>Direction is good but need freedom to develop as you go with particular groups of students.</i> • <i>But it should leave the sight to change to teachers.</i> • <i>It keeps the teachers accountable.</i> • <i>It is important to have a syllabus for the teacher. To have a basis and structure for the course.</i> • <i>Yes – for the sake of new teachers who would otherwise lack confidence & may end up re-inventing the wheel. At the same time there should be room for continuing evolution.</i> • <i>Explicitly flexible</i>
Comments indicating that explicit syllabus documents are not necessary (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It could be restrictive for the teacher</i> • <i>But not strictly specified.</i> • <i>Who wants to combine all the courses in one level together? That's a big job. We need a team, a supervisor and less teaching hours.</i>
Other (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It depends on the course. Useful in some cases, limiting in others.</i> • <i>It helps but it is also very restricting – a little freedom in the syllabus for special projects helps.</i> • <i>It is helpful if done well, but not strictly necessary.</i> • <i>Students who can't read, who have it in their language? Or it is the teacher's plan?</i>

Table 14: Comments relating to the perceived usefulness of syllabus documents made available by institutions where respondents worked

Comment types	Comments
Comment relating to need for flexibility (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Course outlines are available. These are not detailed so as to allow flexibility to be able to meet the students' needs e.g., specific grammar needs.</i>
Syllabus documents not seen (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I haven't seen them.</i>
Comments relating to lack of clarity in syllabus documents (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I assume the syllabus is the same as the course outline.</i> • <i>They seem a bit vague/ superficial – the kind of documents anyone could create by simply copying out the list of contents/skills at the front of most textbooks!</i> • <i>They are useful as guides, but comments on methodology and/or materials have limited usefulness. - It is very important to know what to teach and sometimes when, but I am happy to work out how to deliver it myself.</i> • <i>The syllabus is basically the book and a Writing syllabus which is just the writing topics. However, they are closely related to the content in the book.</i> • <i>-In some ways not really a syllabus only objectives.</i> • <i>Our document includes (mostly task-based) objectives and assessments for each course. These are not broken down, however, into 'units of work'. Teachers have to do that –or use previous teachers.</i> • <i>I think the objectives give (sometimes) the course a clear purpose but sometimes the focus on tasks and vocab. obscures elements of language e.g., what type of grammar is covered.</i> • <i>Again, because of recent changes to syllabus documents and now less specific (and therefore I believe less useful) than before.</i> • <i>not very useful – very bare curriculum style (whys) as opposed to lists (whats)</i>
Comments relating to student needs (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sometimes the syllabus needs minor adaptation to meet students' needs e.g. Middle Eastern students.</i> • <i>For the sake of the students and to ensure some overall continuity given faculty turnover, I believe a set of basic documents is important, but they are not written in stone.</i> • <i>They don't tell me anything in terms of students achieved outcomes in their proficiency performance.</i> • <i>Students in my institution do not refer to the syllabus; they simply ask the teacher about the content of the next class if they want.</i> • <i>It provides accountability and a guide for students about what is to be covered. It also keeps the teacher on task.</i>
Comments relating to importance of syllabuses (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you don't know where the goal is, how can you know if your students reach it or not?</i> • <i>I am designing my own as I teach this year as the previous one seemed entirely focused on discrete grammar points from a text book.</i> • <i>If they are not essential, I work on making them so.</i>
Other (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Depends on which programme you are teaching on.</i> • <i>It depends who makes the syllabus! – should be a very experienced teacher/ director of studies.</i> • <i>There are problems if the teacher does not follow it.</i> • <i>It complements the book and provides extra practice of</i>

	<p>various skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depends on the skill area/ course.
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Table 15: Comments relating to what respondents would do if not provided with a syllabus for their courses

Comment types	Comments
Comments relating to preparation of own syllabus (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The first time around I usually struggle to develop it as I go because there is little warning but the second time I would have it ready to explain to the students up front instead of as I go.</i> • <i>The second time of teaching the course I would do “b”(Prepare one yourself for your own use and give a copy to students.)</i> • <i>Depending on the type of course I would perhaps prepare and give my students a copy.</i> • <i>I cannot function well as a teacher without some form of syllabus document... even if I edit it according to need as the course proceeds.</i> • <i>My copy & the student’s copies usually are different in detail.</i>
Comments that indicate (or seem to indicate) an approach other than preparing a syllabus document (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This depends on time. At a minimum I prepare a week or two’s unit of work and have some idea of what will follow.</i> • <i>When teaching “General English” (no set syllabus) I began with D(Focus on material and methodology rather than syllabus) and C (Allow the syllabus to emerge as the teaching proceeds) but later realised the need for A (Prepare one yourself for own use.)</i> • <i>What do you mean “syllabus document”? (I don’t think we have one) Sometimes I will prepare some extra teaching materials by myself.</i> • <i>Depends on the facility because some private places are totally businesses operated by non-educators and non-teachers.</i>
Comment indicating allowing textbook to dictate syllabus (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Follow the textbook</i>
Provide students with an outline only (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I’d give the students the general outline.</i>
Comment that is difficult to interpret (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Some course have detailed syllabuses, some (especially part-time) don’t</i> • <i>It depends on length, time of each class, student level, class name/overall goal. It also depends if the class is new to the course.</i>

Table 16: Examples of course outcomes provided by respondents

Response types	Examples	Discussion
<p>Responses that specify course outcomes in terms of measurable 'can-do' statements that are linguistically grounded (15)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be able to ask for directions (Year 2- English conversation & writing) • Recognition of conjunctions showing similarity, contrast and alternative (Year 2 – reading). • Can use the present simple to talk about daily routines (Level 1). • Will be able to accurately select between 'will' and 'going to' for expressing predictions (General English Intermediate) • Students should be able to make polite requests (Elementary General English); • Increase confidence (Year 1 English conversation). 	<p>Although I placed 15 examples in this category, several of them are problematic in some respects. Thus, the first example below makes no reference to the meaning/s of past tense that are in focus and the second example below makes reference to a general area of vocabulary (food) but does not indicate whether money/ weight etc. are to be considered.</p> <p><i>Master simple past tense forms (Reading & Writing elementary level)</i></p> <p><i>Hold a basic conversation in English relating to shopping for food ((Year 1- general English).</i></p>
<p>Responses that lack language indicators and are too general to be measurable (47)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy in reading & writing (Year 12 & 13 International English). • Understanding a written text with increased understanding & critical awareness (Upper intermediate –reading & writing). • Students are able to communicate adequately on general topics (Yr2 – general communicative English); • Write a letter of complaint to a company for dissatisfaction (Intermediate level 4 – English communication); • By the end of this course students should have shown in their writing that they have converted data into oral & written reports (Year 1 :EAP); • Students will be able to conduct research on a topic of their choice (related to the subject matter), present a 5 minute report to the class, and write a 500 word summary synthesizing their research (Upper level/ content course). 	<p>The last two examples here are indicative of a very common approach among respondents to the specification of course outcomes, one that is superficially more specific than the other examples in this section but provides very little real indication of what is expected in terms of overall structuring, internal organization or linguistic realization. Examples such as these refer, in general terms, to activities that will be included in a course (e.g. giving presentations, writing letters and reports) but lack language indicators.</p>

Table 17: Comments relating to how respondents decide what to teach in their courses

Comment types:	Comments (total = 26)
<p>Related to students needs affecting the choice of 'what' to teach (10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We change /update the syllabus regularly resulting from the students and teacher feedback.</i> • <i>Needs analysis of students.</i> • <i>Student need analysis may influence slightly.</i> • <i>Students' goals/targets.</i> • <i>Students background learning</i> • <i>Students mainstream demands</i> • <i>I know the needs of the students when they enter the mainstream so I loosely base the topics, genres and skills around this.</i> • <i>Please note that I use the printed syllabus and then add extras or delete according to student needs. Extras can be frequent, deletions are infrequent.</i> • <i>Select activities from a range of resources based on outcomes and student needs.</i> • <i>They need a mix of texts.</i>
<p>Related to the institute deciding or group deciding (7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The institution decides.</i> • <i>Follow the specified textbook.</i> • <i>Course improvement meetings</i> • <i>There is a copy kept of previous syllabi from past years but it can be and often (sometimes) changed year to year. Teacher meetings to discuss.</i> • <i>Institution has set outcomes for each course.</i> • <i>My institution assembles material to be used in class and at home.</i> • <i>If the course is a compulsory course for a certain year group there's a fixed syllabus but we still need to adjust the syllabus every year based on the previous years' experience/ comments.</i>
<p>Related mainly to own decision (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I design my course and (I hope) others follow me! We do course together – the course is assessment driven.</i> • <i>I have made course outlines</i> • <i>I find out the aims of the course and design the syllabus myself. If I'm the only person teaching this new course.</i>
<p>Other (6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our courses are 8 weeks with 1 week between</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Various courses</i> • Any group of students always surprise me with what they know & don't know. • Use the curriculum laid out by their textbook. • We have a national curriculum to follow and then supplement it. • It depends on the case.
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Table 18: *Comments relating to whether respondents would use a follow up textbook in the same series with a group of students*

Comment types:	Comments
Related to students needs affecting the decision (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on lots of factors such as level reached by students. • I would re-assess the needs of students. Sometimes a change is refreshing for students and teachers. • <i>Or when they've finish the first textbook and assuming the textbook had proven useful to the students.</i> • <i>It depends totally on their English growth as the next level is a series might be too easy and therefore not suited for the students.</i> • <i>Previously we had been doing this, but now the students are progressing faster and should be covering more than one textbook.</i>
Related to using a wide range of texts (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't usually use course books. I use a wide range of text books to suit my specific needs. • Don't use one textbook for a course • As a general rule but would supplement with other material with different focus. • <i>They need a mix of texts.</i>
Related to participants not having a choice (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have no choice in the texts
Related to textbooks not being connected to each level. (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not necessarily match levels for all skills
Related to participants being uncertain.(8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe not necessarily. • Possible because a series should develop vocabulary, grammar, topics in some logical way. Not necessarily

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• – textbooks have a hidden syllabus, which may not match your own.• Probably• Maybe• <i>Not exactly</i>• <i>Probably I would keep to a series- we do have an overall plan, in fact, but the plan has taken some time to settle down.</i>• <i>This sometimes happens, not always. I think it could be a good idea as the writer may have “levels” for their books (do) and if you don’t use the next level in the series you’ll have to guess.</i>
Other (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I don’t really teach in this way.• Don’t like textbooks.• When appropriate• <i>Sometimes, we do choose higher level textbooks for the higher level but not always.</i>• <i>Not necessarily.</i>• <i>If the book were obviously of the same quality as the 1st one, and I was satisfied with the first one then yes.</i>• <i>Only if appropriate</i>

Table 19: Respondents' reasons for moving from one textbook series to another or not having responded to a question about series selection

Response types	
Responses relating to student feedback (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it proves to be ineffective for that class. • if students found it dull/ difficult I'd change the following year. • <i>Sometimes students complain about the book. They want to change the book, not the teachers.</i> • <i>We might have to even when students are not ready hence 'follow syllabus'</i> • according to students' feedback • Would depend on learners.. whether they were happy with the program... availability of textbooks suited to. • <i>Variety, series might 'jump' too much between levels, book might have been boring/ not successful for students.</i>
Responses relating to course/ programme type (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may be progressing from a general skills to an academic skills course. • the students might be on a different programme
Select better/more appropriate textbook (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly another text would address needs more flexibly • Differences between books • Many course books available now • <i>The content of the next level. Of course the tasks are important. Especially we can see some higher level book cut down activities.</i> • relevancy, appropriateness, activity types
General feelings about the textbook (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It would depend on my feelings about the textbook.</i>
Textbook series not meeting needs/course objectives (badly chosen in first place)? (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on the students 'needs' • The class may not necessarily be ready to move to that specific book – another book may be more suitable in terms of context – also, needs of students may change. • If it is no longer appropriate for their needs or the outcomes of the course. • Would choose what is most suitable/ appropriate as I saw it – considering the needs & abilities of the students.
Mixed (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The feedback from students regarding the textbook would partly influence my decision, as would other available alternatives, and the learning outcomes/ assessments/ requirements for the next level. • It depends on how well that textbook worked with the group, whether they needed continuity or needed a change, whether progression matched theirs, how good the next level was & many more.
Prefer to vary series (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would never stick to one series as I believe in child-centred learning. • <i>There is a "sameness" to some series which might get a bit tiresome</i>
Use a variety of resources or no textbooks (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing ticked – I prefer to take snippets from many sources to create what I want. Some books are good for some things, not good for others. • I don't use course books very much at all. • I try to create core tasks & students with specific problems (e.g, fragments, run-ons, articles), choose worksheets based on those. • I would assume so, but I have almost exclusively worked with my own materials and have no experience with

	<p>headway or other similar series.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't use textbooks much, but it would depend on the needs of the students & the outcomes for the course. Most textbooks don't cover reading /writing etc. in a deep enough way or the way I want them to be taught. • <i>we rarely use a textbook right through – we jump about choosing appropriate language from a variety of sources</i> • Parts of a text might be appropriate. However, additional texts may prove to be more helpful for particular skills.
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Table 20: *Aspects of discourse respondents considered important*

Macro-level (39)	Macro-level (general)	macro-level
	Text organization (general) (18)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text organization for specific texts- some useful speech patterns (depending) on level of ss; • specific texts; • structure (essay & paragraph) • paragraphing – one topic for each para., rounding off writing with a concluding para., introductions – general statement with no details.-discourse is an NB part of every skill area; • some sort of genre analysis (or at least conscious raising of genre types, macropatterning); • understanding the structure of an essay; • Variety of genres, text as a whole; • structure/ moves; • text stuff- the way texts work; • introduce text types (e.g., standard in academic presentations), with text types/ across diff.); • text genres - i.e. genre & argument, explanation, narrative genre; • paragraph structure; • macro- structure; • writing genres; • text analysis; • generating & organising ideas in spoken written discourse; • logical organizations and development of ideas, proper linking of ideas; • linking throughout an essay, linking between para., linking between sentences.
	Specific social genres (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dialogue, reports; • writing an email, letter (personal business), opinion letters; • post cards.
	Specific cognitive genres (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrative, descriptive; • narrative mode, descriptive mode

	Formal/ informal; spoken/ written distinctions (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociopragmatics for speaking; • Features of spoken language e.g., informality, levels of formality, features of written language e.g., topic sentences length & longer texts; • Formal / informal writing; • spoken language written language; • functional speaking; • formal & informal spoken & written language.
	Socio-cultural factors (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • socio-linguistic aspects, Aspects that are directly useful to the st. Group; • cultural elements; • appropriacy of language in different situation; • relationships between ideas, register – grammar & vocabulary included in these; • features of spoken language e.g., incomplete sentences, merged words; • culture study of English speaking countries.
	Context (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • context; • context; • In reading & writing sentences need to be looked at in context as well as speaking & listening.
	Critical discourse analysis (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical discourse analysis
Meso-level (27)	Cohesion (17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cohesive devices (x3); • cohesion (x4); • spoken- fillers, written- cohesive links, reference, pronoun use; • connectors, pronoun identification; • identification of pronouns,; • transitional signals; • discourse markers (x2); • linking words; • connectives (temporal, conditionals etc.); • theme and rheme
	Coherence (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coherence (x3); • coherence (& many of their components.); • semantic relations (x2); • means and result; • moves and turns ; • moves and turns (+ adjacency pairs); • turn- taking awareness & strategies
Reference to skills (10)	Communication skills (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It really depends on the level of my students - e.g for my students who are studying nursing at university – communication skills between nurse and patient, advanced listening skills in hand over, paraphrasing and other questioning devices to clarify information; • communication strategies; • giving a speech
	Skills (reading, etc.) (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening, speaking and reading; • It depends on what the paper is – our courses a re paper based and usually include all 4 skills with perhaps an emphasis on one or two; • starting, holding & continuing a conversation,; • discussion roles

	Inferencing skills (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • context clue
	Presentation skills (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations; • referencing
Micro-level (12)	Grammar and lexis, etc. (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • typical lexis/ grammars; • adverbials, agreements – for me right now; • grammar structure use and form; • direct speech, reported speech, relative clauses; • Interrogatives; • micro level; • tenses - present, past, future forms, word order; • sentence structure; • Comparative; • Connotation of some words; • Proper and accurate expressions
	Micro-functions (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questioning & answering, asking for things, giving & asking opinions; • interrogation (difficult for Chinese student)
Other (difficult to classify) (7)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shift in person (from 'we' to 'you, which all refer to the general public; • Interaction; • Test; • depends on the course; • according to level of class; • pronunciation & fluency; • all are important
Question not understood (3)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't understand; • not sure; • please clarify indicated above the phrase' aspects of discourse'.

**Appendix 3: Semi- structured Interview Questions for Language
Education Managers**

Semi- structured Interview Questions for Language Education Managers

1. Which courses do you offer? For example,
 - core language development courses;
 - skills specific courses (e.g. reading courses);
 - ESP –academic courses ;
 - Other ESP courses
2. Why do you offer these courses?
3. Who makes decisions about what to include in each course?
4. How are these decisions made?
5. Is there, in your opinion, any difference between a proficiency-based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are language-specific (e.g. The students will be able to use the past perfect for events further back in the past than other events)? **(Q6)** If so, what do you think the differences are?
7. If you offer skill-specific courses, are different skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year taught by the same person or different people?
8. Do you believe that skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year should be closely linked and **(Q9)** if skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year are taught by different people, what efforts are made, if any, to ensure that the courses are closely linked?
10. What sort of things do you believe should be taught in a writing course? **(Q11)** Could you give an example?
12. In relation to the previous question, what sorts of things do you think your teachers generally teach in writing courses?
13. Do you think that language rules should be taught (a) explicitly, (b) implicitly, (c) not at all?
14. In relation to the previous question, what do you think your teachers generally do?

- 15 In a core language development course, how much time do you think teachers should spend on (a) teaching new language, and (b) practicing using new language?
- 16 In relation to the previous question, how much time do you think your teachers generally spend on a) teaching new language, and (b) practicing using new language?
- 17 Does the content of courses offered by your institution vary a lot from year to year?
- 18 Do your teachers use textbooks?
- 19 If your teachers use textbooks, how are they selected and by whom?
- 20 Who sets assessments for students (a) during courses, and (b) **(Q21)** at the end of courses?
- 22 How is the content of end of course tests/ exams determined?
- 23 Are there any courses offered by your institution that you would be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test (such as IELTS) *rather than* an internal exam and **(Q24)** if so, which type of courses are they?
- 25 What qualifications do you expect your teachers to have as a minimum?
- 26 Have all of your teachers done a course of some kind in teaching language or languages?
- 27 How many of your teachers do you think have done a course in teaching language or languages that includes assessed teaching practice?
- 28 Are your courses described in terms of levels? **(Q29)** If so, do you have statements that describe the different levels? **(Q30)** Could you give me an example?
- 31 Does your institution have documents that outline the content of each of your courses? If so, **(Q32)** how detailed are these documents? **(Q33)** Do they include specific language that is to be taught and, **(Q34)** if so, how is it described? **(Q35)** Who is responsible for designing these documents? **(Q36)** Do they make reference to the nature of tests and examinations? **(Q37)** Do they include a list of objectives/ outcomes/ 'can-do' statements and what would an example of one be? **(Q38)** What do you do to make sure that all of your teaching staff have read these documents?

- 39 Would you say that the main focus of the majority courses taught in your institute is (a) grammar, (b) tasks, (c) vocabulary, (d) language skills, (e) learning skills, (f) some combination of these?
- 40 Does your institution implement any of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) recommendations? **(Q41)** Why? / Why not?
- 42 What professional development opportunities, if any, are provided for your teaching staff and, **(Q43)** if so, how are decisions made about what to offer?
- 44 Do you think it is important that your teachers are aware of how the field/ area of English language teaching has developed over time?
- 45 Do you try to ensure that your teachers are aware of important developments in language teaching, past and present? **(Q47)** If so, how?
- 48 Any other comments you wish to make?

Appendix 4: Semi- structured Interview transcripts of the Language Education Managers

Transcription conventions

Normal orthographic conventions are followed.

Only pseudonyms are used.

Where names (of people or programmes) or other possible identifiers were included, they have been replaced by a capital letter (e.g. X; Y), a general indicator (e.g. Academic English rather than the specific programme name) accompanied by a footnote indication the type of material that has been replaced.

... = pause

Anne

I[nterviewer]: *Which courses do you offer? For example, core language, development courses; skills specific courses (e.g. reading courses); ESP – academic courses and other ESP courses*

R[espondent]: Okay, so, the [X centre] has two major components. There is a General English Programme that runs levels, from Starter to Advanced. They have 2 lessons, 2 two hour lessons per day. Their first lesson is just a core language lesson using a course book like Cutting Edge or New Headway and then their second lesson they have, they have a choice depending on which level they are in. So, the higher levels, they can either take IELTS as their option, class Business English or what we call Topics, which is a thematically based skills course and each week has a different skill.

I: *Why do you think your institute has chosen to have these courses?*

The language component,.. and then the optional course? Ermm. That's a good question. I don't know. I have been here four years and it's always been like that... As long as I have been here it's been that way. I don't ... I think that's not dissimilar to a lot of language institutes...to have that core component and then an optional component. They have also recently started, for the higher General English classes; they can do a TESOL erm option. A ten week TESOL option and then they do the TKT exam at the end. ..The other main side of the programme, which is the programme that I am the head of, is the Academic English course and our goal is to prepare students for study at a tertiary institute. Predominantly here at the University of X, because we are associated with them. But we also do prepare students to go to Y and Z university and other places. We have five levels starting at introduction to academic and then all the way up we call them module one, two, three and four. Four, being the equivalent to an advanced level. And again same thing they have a two hour lesson which focuses on language and academic skills. So, reading skills and strategies, listening to lectures and note taking. They do a research component at each level and it gradually gets higher and higher. So at the Module 4 level they do a 1500 word research essay, fully cited, paraphrasing, in- text citations, summarising, APA referencing, we teach that skill, and then they do an oral presentation with Powerpoint slides, at all levels. But, obviously it gets longer and bigger as they

go. The second lesson....at the introduction and Module one level their second lesson is really a continuation of the first. Really heavily language focused because that's really what they need. From module 2, 3 and 4 their option..., they can either take IELTS because they need that to get into their tertiary programme or they can take an academic skills course, which is a combination of using a textbook and it's got tasks-based projects, interspersed. And finally, we have a Foundation Certificate in English for academic purposes, which is a 20 week course. Which is the module three and four combination and students who do that programme, they need a conditional offer from the University, and it will state then that they need to get Grade *A B* or *C* depending on the programme that they're going into. A *C* is mainly for undergraduate programmes, a *B* is for most postgraduate programmes and an *A* is for certain postgraduate programs like law and commerce ermm and anything related to teaching education, require an *A*, which is the equivalent to an IELTS seven. And so that's another option. The other addition that we've done recently, because we've recently changed our schedule and timetable this year....so they have 20 contact hours per week which includes two hours in the....What's called the X Workshop, which is in the computer... one of the five computer labs we have where the academic students do their research and we also provide what we call workshops and for the students, these are optional. They are not required to attend them. Each level both in General and Academic offer two workshops per week and students sign up for them there is a signup sheet, and it'll say for example, Module four Tuesday, listening and it will have the lecture title and Wednesday could be an ESP type reading subject specific and we try to use the University's texts and for students they're completely optional, whether students attend them or not. So those, that's really the courses.

I: Who makes decisions about what to include in each course?

Right, so X¹⁷ is the academic manager. So X oversees all the programs and courses. There is a senior teacher Y for Gen English oh. So Y oversees the Gen English program. So Y is looking at textbooks and developing programs, topics etc, but she needs final approval for any major changes from X. And I oversee the academic program and ermmm again if there are any major decisions then I run them by X. But a lot of the day-to-day sort of research and that, I make those

final decisions, and I just relay that information. I forgot to say there is one other programme area and that's Teacher training. We were er, , we did do Trinity, but we've now become a CELTA centre. So, there are two people in charge of teacher training..

I: *Is there, in your opinion, any difference between a proficiency-based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are language-specific (e.g. The students will be able to use the past perfect for events further back in the past than other events)?*

R: I think - so, a proficiency, like a Cambridge kind of exam based? (*I: I explain*)... In the General English programme, because they have new student intakes every Monday and students leaving every Friday, it's a rolling intake, erm, they , when a student leaves, they , their report has 'can-do' statements. So, students can do de ded de da...because they are constantly taking in new people and leaving. The academic programme, each course is 10 weeks, students must start and finish at the same time. People can't leave part way through or start part way through. And we're, relatively tied to the IELTS bands. The programme is not an IELTS based programme at all but, we try to be very careful with our assessments and make sure that we are in line with ... and most of our students take the IELTS exam and so it's quite good for us , we can see what they got on their IELTS and we can see how they're doing in our programme. So, we're, we, you know, because the skills we do in our academic programme are totally different from what they do in IELTS but there is certainly a level equivalency and generally we're pretty spot on with that. So, as I say, people exiting at Module 4 will either exit at a IELTS 6 or higher depending on their grade.

I: *So, can I just ask you then to round off what do you think then are the main differences between the proficiency based and the language specific courses?*

R: I don't think there is a huge difference really. I think you have to have a certain language to have the proficiency. So, I think they're intertwined. In Academic English in the higher levels we focus on .. on the skills rather than the language but.. because, there is an assumption that you have to have a certain amount of language to be able to acquire the skills. And I think once students reach, say their, intermediate level, they've studied all the language they are ever going to

study. It's just whether they can produce and use it appropriately, and that seems to be the biggest stumbling block.

I: If you offer skill-specific courses, are different skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year taught by the same person or different people?

R: Different people. So, in academic block its 10 weeks and we try to have the same teach teaching the same group of students for 10 weeks. (*I: For all the skills*). They'll have two, they'll have a lesson 1 teacher and the lesson 1 teacher has an in house course book that's doing language and skills. And the second lesson teacher is either an IELTS teacher or a skills based, task- based teacher. So, they'll have two teachers but those two teachers will stay with them for 10 weeks. General English changes because the number of students fluctuates continually and classes may need to open or close so it's a little bit, there is more changes. They try to keep the same teachers even in General English for 10 weeks. But it does fluctuate a little bit more based on student numbers.

I: Do you believe that skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year should be closely linked?

R: So, teaching discreet skills? Rather than intergrated? I think you can't wholly separate the skills. Because I think if you have a communicative approach to teaching, you never just going to walk in and hand them a piece of paper and say right... So, there is always going to be some lead in, be it a listening or reading or something even if the main skill is writing. And then there is going to be some type of follow up. There might be a language aspect, and there will be a follow up speaking exercise. So, I think they always have to be integrated to some degree but the main focus may be one skill.....erm and I think it depends if you link things thematically. It's better to have the same teacher because they can keep a theme rolling between the skills. Having said that, the only reason I see an advantage to having courses taught as discrete skills is that , generally there are certain language groups who excel in one skill area more than in others. So, for example, I don't want to put everybody into one category but, we tend to find Arab students have a beautiful gift of the gap. They come from an oral culture so they are very fluent, communicative speakers and good listeners but they are not good readers and they are not good writers. So, they tend to in a course, erm, quite

often they do poorly in reading and writing and very well in listening and speaking and the way that our academic course is designed. It's a 10 week course. They have an exam half way, so a kind of progress test and then they have a final exam at the end. They must pass each individual skill to pass the course. So, they have to have a minimum C in reading, writing, listening and speaking and as well as their research. And if they fail one skill they fail the course. The reason this was introduced was because in the past there was an overall grade, you had students who did fantastically well in their listening and speaking. Couldn't write a grammatically accurate sentence and they were passing to the next level because of their skills in listening and speaking and they would move up and of course they didn't have the ability to do the reading and writing and of course it just kind of snowballed. So, it was really, ...which is no different from say an IELTS exam. So, the university says you need an overall 6. It will state no band less than 5.5. So that's really in line with that and if you had discrete courses teaching a particular skill, you could then have students going higher in certain skills and only repeating one module of writing.. But then administratively that becomes very complicated. ...

You end up having classes of Arab students doing lower level writing and you'd have groups of Asian students doing higher levels of writing but lower levels of listening and speaking and I think, I think the best approach is to have an integrated approach, although it.. it is a balance in catering to different language groups in terms of their strengths and their weaknesses, which is partly how the concept of the workshops evolved that students could then sign up for specific skills. 'Ok, I'm not so good at writing, I'll sign up for writing.' But unfortunately the reality of that system is that the best students go to the workshops and the students who really need the workshops don't sign up. And, what do you do? I mean, teachers encourage them to go, I encourage them to go, but...

I[nterviewer]...it's their choice...

R: ...it's their choice and generally the people who really need it aren't the ones who are attending.

I: Now, I'm just going to shift a bit to speak about writing courses. erm..What sort of things do you believe should be taught in a writing course?

R: Well, I guess it depends what the purpose is. I think in General English there tends to be a lesser focus on writing than there is in an academic programme and that's generally because students do, in general English are doing it for communication and writing as a, is probably one of the lowest skills that they perceive that they need. Whereas in academic it is one of the highest focuses and...and...so depending on the level, at the lower levels we really focus on grammatical accuracy, range of structures, sentence structure and then that fills sort of from the lowest level getting a, a good sentence, from a simple sentence to a complex, compound sentence accurately. Then going to a paragraph - introduction, body, conclusion - looking at cohesive devices, then shifting to a simple three, um three paragraph essay - introduction, body, conclusion - and really process-driven and then getting to longer essays and then looking at all the genres. The way that we do it, we start with descriptive essays, narrative, compare and contrast, advantages and disadvantages, process, discursive and finally argumentative at the highest level and in there we also introduce summary writing and paraphrasing at the highest level, because that's such a difficult skill. So, I think the focus at the lowest levels is heavy on the language and getting an accurate simple sentence and then expanding on that throughout and then of course the appropriate cohesive devices and the appropriate grammar for writing a process or writing a comparative um, compare- contrast and at the higher levels really exploiting vocabulary and a range of structures. Because, certainly when we mark writing, we're looking at four categories usually and that's task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical range and accuracy, and grammatical range and accuracy. So that's what we are expecting from them, so that's what we're trying to input into them.

I: You've answered about 3 questions in that response of that...

R: oh, great.

I: Moving on...do you think that, you mentioned that at the lower level the focus is on language, and the rules and getting sentences right. Do you think that language rules should be taught explicitly or implicitly, or not at all?

R: I definitely think it should be taught, um, preferably implicitly. I think it's best to exploit texts or things and elicit the language from the students rather than say *Here is the present simple*. But when you draw it out from the students, then

getting the focus on form and meaning but I think the best thing is to elicit it from context. I definitely have a bee in my bonnet about teaching anything, particularly vocabulary you know, just, you know, 'here is a list of words, learn them'. I think context is really everything and that can be grammar and vocabulary. I think context is crucial, because teaching any of those things without a context is just a, a waste of time and what you do find is by the time students reach an intermediate level they'll often say if you're, if you are teaching a grammatical point, they'll say 'Oh we know this, we've done this' And yet they can't produce it in context accurately. So to me that just erm, that just shows and emphasizes the point that you can give them all the little gap fill exercises for grammar but producing it is completely another matter, so I'm not such a fan of... I know some teachers love books like Murphy and here let's do all of these cos it is all nicely laid out on the left hand side and it explains it all on the right hand side and filling all the gaps and I've seen teachers use it, but to me it is just a waste of time really, because unless you can get them to produce it in context...

I: Now in relation to this question about language being taught explicitly, implicitly or not at all, what do you think your teachers here generally do?

R: I think it's a mixture. I think (laughs), um, I'm not in the classes so I mean we do do observations and I get snippets here and there. But I do, I have seen, at the photocopier, the dreaded Murphy book sitting there and so I know if someone's used that in class. I understand why they've done it but I don't think it's getting the desired effect. I think at the higher levels teachers tend not to focus on language because there's an assumption that students have it. But then they're frustrated that they're not producing it. So, I think at the higher levels there is a tendency to ignore language and I think it still has to be a part of what we do. At the lower levels I think sometimes people struggle, they know that they need it, um but I think some people are. I think some teachers are more comfortable with grammar than others. And I think the ones who are comfortable with grammar probably exploit it more than those who aren't and I think it's probably a real range between people teaching it quite explicitly or implicitly and those who are not doing it at all. And I think that's generally because the teachers themselves are not confident or comfortable and I recently observed a class and the teacher was doing, with a Module 1, so it is a pre-intermediate level, doing the 'future present

continuous' and 'going to' and it's a very subtle grammatical point and unfortunately it didn't quite go that well because the students couldn't see the difference between them and it is really really subtle, and I think it wasn't for the teachers lack of knowledge in terms of the teacher knowing what the difference is, but how to get the students to understand that. It, it's, it is difficult to, to do um so I don't yeah. I would say it's a real mix of what actually goes on.

I: So in the core language development course, how much time do you think teachers should spend on teaching new language and then practicing using the new language?

R: (pause).... Um, well that's a good question. Well, what I would like to see people doing is, it would be extracting the language from something be it a listening or a reading. Extracting the language, getting students kind of using it without even realizing they're using it, then elicit the form, get the form right, then get the meaning right and then practicing it in as many different ways as possible - written, spoken.. So I would see more emphasis on use, than actually focusing on the structure itself. And I think too, I mean I recently taught a General English starter class for quite a while and I have to say I mean it is just they need, at the lowest level, they just need so much repetition. You can't do the same thing enough times with them and you'd have to repeat it over days really, for it to get in. So, I think a lot has to do with the level that you are working at, because at a starter level, quite literally. Well, because they have so little vocabulary it is difficult to really extract it from context cos as soon as you give the context half the vocabulary they don't know, so then you spend all the time on the vocabulary but you can't repeat it enough you really have to go over the form form, form, form, form, form, form a lot more than I would expect you'd have to go over form at an intermediate or a higher level. So, I think level is, plays a key factor in how much time you'd focus on form and how much time you would practice on production.

I: So, I'm going to ask you this questions but I think it has been answered in your previous response...So, in relation to how much time you think teachers should generally spend on that, what do you think actually happens at the centre? Do most people spend more time on teaching the new language or practicing using the new language?

R: Um, probably more on practicing rather than teaching I would say, probably.

I: *And does the content of the courses here, offered by the institute vary from year to year?*

R: The content...

I: *The actual content of the courses*

R: Yes and no. Um in General English I would say not as much. They use for 10 weeks ...they'll use 'Cutting Edge' and then the next 10 weeks they'll use 'New Headway' and then they alter the course books every 10 weeks, because they don't generally expect someone to stay at a level for more than 20 weeks and, so, that really hasn't changed in the last 4 years that I've been here. The second lesson, is it's always under development because they are in-house produced, skills-based lessons and they try to update those, but it's a matter of time really and resources to have and people who can develop and change those lessons, but in the last year they've really had a good look at all of the lessons and so they've said, erm 'which ones are working not at all and we'll pull those out' and they've started slowly replacing them. In academic, there has been a massive overhaul of the course and the programme. So, I've been here four years. I started as a teacher in academic and four years ago we were using in-house produced course books that had been developed by someone down at Department X at Y¹² and they had been produced about 10 years ago I think. So, by the time I came, by the time I came about 5 years ago they were quite outdated and they were, they were collabora..., they weren't written in-house. They were a collaboration of various texts thrown together and they were photocopies of photocopies of photocopies um.. and we didn't have a clear um syllabus or course objectives, um the course was really lacking structure and in the last, I would say, in the last year and a half to 2 years. Myself and one of my project leaders, we wrote the course outline, which is a list of all the skills an objectives for each module. So, it's a kind of a holistic view of each module. The course goals and objectives broken down by skill areas that the course aims to meet, for students to meet, as well as what skills they'll be examined on etc. and then from that there is a syllabus for each course that has a weekly sort of break down of those skills and how the materials meet those and we're have to find, um, we have some certain class sets for listenings cos listenings are quite difficult to get and all of the course books have been re-

done, um They are still, there's some in-house written material and a lot of it is still taken from various but newer academic published books on the market and everything has been typed up beautifully, formatted, you can actually see the photos and read the printing now and referenced. And of course to maintain copyright. I mean there are really stringent copyright rules and we have done everything we can to adhere to those. So, the academic programme has had a massive, massive overhaul over the last two years. I think everyone would agree for the better, but it's been a huge job and they are still not a 100% perfect. But then I think, I think there is also no such thing as the perfect course because you don't know who your students are and what may have worked beautifully with one group might not work with the next and, I think that's, the teacher's job is to be able to adapt for the needs of their class.

I: You told me that your teachers do use textbooks here, so, how are these textbooks selected and by whom?

R: Ok, the General English textbooks um hm probably chosen by X's predecessor²², the previous academic manager, but teachers will sometimes come with new, we have a business English course and teachers might come and say 'Ok, we've been using this textbook but, can we look at something new?' We can get in some books on apro, have a look at them and decide which one we think is more appropriate. But, because students don't buy the textbooks in General English, they pay a deposit towards them. We loan them out and then they hand them back in and as long as they're clean, they get their full deposit back. You can't afford to change books very often because it means we'll need 100s of books. Um we recently changed an IELTS book. We had three different books at the higher levels because we had academic students using it and General English students, so we were using different books. But, we decided in the end that really in an IELTS book, students need to write in them. And so we decided that students would now purchase the book and we decided, of three different books at that level we were using for IELTS, everybody kind of put in their 2 cents about which one they thought was the best, um and now all of those level of courses are all using the same book and they purchase it. So, that was kind of a collaborative decision. For the academic, because the booklets are produced in-house, there's really no discussion about that and if teachers feel the need to supplement the

materials, we ask them to give them to the project leaders because if they feel there is a gap in the book, then we want to fill that gap and put it in. We do have class sets for listenings, because listenings are so difficult to come by level-appropriate, academic listenings and so we looked at what was available on the market and.. there's not a huge amount, especially when you get to lower levels you know when you are talking about pre-intermediate level of academic English, um there's not a lot. So, we went with what was on the market and we have a class set of listenings for each level of academic that teachers can supplement with. Um, they like it, they don't like it. You know it seems to be always the case and for the second class in academic, we did go with a course book, which at the time again there weren't a lot of integrated academic course books either skills-based and we went with one book which we split over two courses and interspersed with task-based projects and it was selected by a group of teachers and the senior academic teacher at that time. A lot of teachers don't like it, um and so by not liking it I think they actually don't really use it, they're supposed to. The students don't buy it so it's not a huge; I mean if the students were paying for it then I would insist that the teachers use it. But I, you know, I encourage them to use it, and I have taught the course myself so I know, I always highlight, 'There is good material in here', but you do have to adapt it and make it appropriate. So, I don't throw the baby out with the bath water and, and you know, teachers say 'Can we change it?', but it is an enormous investment from the school. You can't just change text books and you know that, undoubtedly, if you select another one and you've got a group of teachers teaching from it, inevitably, they'll find an issue. I mean I hear people complain about 'Headway' all the time and whether you like it or you don't like it, the people who wrote Headway, they're making a lot of money around the world. So, they must be doing, they must be doing something right. I think course book writing is a difficult job.

I: Now, I'm just going to shift from textbooks to some questions on assessments, okay? Who sets assessments for your students during courses and at the end of the courses?

R: Right, this is a bit of a sore point here. Um, in General English they have assessments every 6 weeks, um I don't know who actually wrote them. They were written before I started here. They've been tweaked I think a little bit along the

way um General English students have to have over 80% to go to the next level. But, I don't think they have to pass each skill like we do in Academic English. In Academic English we have been working very hard over the last 2 years to refine our assessments um we have we have been working towards two versions of each level of each exam so that we alternate them from block to block. Because we do get a lot of students who do have to repeat a level and when I started here they used the same set of exams every block, so you'd have a student repeating and doing the same exam. Interestingly, many of them still failing, but um so we have been working really hard towards that. They have been changed quite a lot in the last 2 years; certain exams have been replaced because teachers really disagreed with some of the aspects tested. um Assessments is a real bone of contention among some of the academic teachers, um we don't allow teachers to see them in advance because erm they teach to the test and really you know that's my,.. I have always as a teacher; I have always believed that if you provide the students with the skills they should be able to do the test as long as there is not a question type they have never seen before. But, we make it clear to the teachers what the question types will be, um it could be any of these question types, it could be, you know if it's a reading: true-false, multiple choice, 'short answer, matching headings, vocabulary, whatever. So, that students, and we also make sure that in the books that we've done that there are different question types so that they've been exposed to it at some point. But we're not perfect and we're pretty, um, we're, we're, resourcing is always an issue because we don't have a team of assessment writers whose job is designated to work on assessments it has to fit in with all the every-day teaching, administrative duties and you know typos happen or we don't have, I suppose the biggest issue is that it's very, although it is obviously best practice to pilot any new assessment before you use it in this kind of environment *How do you pilot them?*. Because if you pilot them in a class then it's out, I mean even if you do it in test conditions it's still out there and so there's been some bad feeling among some of the teachers that the assessments have not been fair, um I don't actually think that's entirely true at all, I'm not suggesting that the assessment are perfect. But we do, I mean if an assessment goes particularly badly for whatever reason. If it's a new assessment and it has gone very badly, then we do a statistical analysis and we look at them and if we find,

you know, a certain question has gone bad then we adjust the scores, that's not best practice either, but you do the best you that you can. Interestingly enough, I tend to find that when teachers complain bitterly about an assessment and they'll say, you know, 'this question is unfair' or whatever, when we do the statistical analysis we generally find that the question they complained about was not the problem. And interestingly the question that they didn't mention was the problem um **or**, the, on the other hand um we never get any complaints about assessments when students do fantastically well. And this recently happened that students were complaining about a, one section of an assessment and I said, 'Ok, well, how do you think the students did in the other sections?' Well they hadn't really thought about it, because students hadn't done badly and I said 'Alright, we'll do a statistical analysis and we'll look at it' And of course what I found was that the other sections of the test were far too easy. You know that, in a class I was getting a 100% of, yeah 100% right for an entire section of a test. And I said, 'You didn't raise this as an issue.' And I said that 'My issue is that I think sections 1,2 and 3 are too **easy**.' 'Uh right' (laughs) So, tests are really a tricky point, but I really feel we're getting closer and closer and closer and you know once we've got the 2 versions all sorted and we're pretty close to being there, then we'll look at introducing another version. Cos, I think 2 versions actually isn't enough we really need 3 versions and then we will, because we have 2 that we can work with then we can do some piloting, perhaps down at the university or with another, another equivalent because you cannot pilot the assessments here I just think that's not feasible so that's.....

I: ...that's the sore point...

R: That's the sore point (laughs)

I: Are there any, and this relates actually, it is interesting how you mentioned earlier how you try to equate it to IELTS, are there any courses offered by your institution that you'd be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test, such as IELTS, rather than an internal exam? And if so, which type of courses are they?

R: Um, (pause), There is, there is a certain amount of pressure on the academic programme to maintain our standards in line with IELTS, in that we don't become more difficult than IELTS because if that happens then students would say 'Why

would I take academic, it's too hard, I can take IELTS' and some students actually perceive it that way already, and some students perceive it the other way. That the course has been easier than IELTS, a lot of the Arab students perceive it that way cos they tend not to do particularly well on IELTS, because IELTS is so rigid about spelling for the listening exam and they tend not to be the best spellers. It is quite, it is difficult to equate our programme with IELTS in that our skills are completely different, particularly listening, more than anything, because we focus on listening to lectures, listening to lectures and note taking and answering comprehension from that and IELTS is completely different from that. We used to be, we used to have more IELTS materials and IELTS type assessments in academic and we've really moved away from that. And I'm quite glad. I'm not a huge fan of IELTS in that I just don't think it's a fair representation of a student's ability other than whether they're good at taking the IELTS exam or not. So, I try not to and with General English, they, they probably do need more of that. Because they can have students in General English up to a year..., and then that student leaves here with a certificate from the X²⁰ saying they finished at the advanced level but that doesn't have..., You know, if you went somewhere and presented that nobody would know what that means. And they're actually looking at offering things like FCE and CAE and I do think for General English students that would be good because then they could walk away with something that had.. is recognized, some meaning. With academic because our Foundation Certificate programme is recognized by the university, for those students who take it they do have some equivalence.

I: Okay, so, I'm just going to move on to start talking about staff. What qualifications do you expect your teachers to have as a minimum? Is there such a thing?

R: Yes, there is. So, they have to have a minimum CELTA. So, they have to have a minimum undergraduate degree in a CELTA or CELTA-equivalent but preferred Celta um... there is a lot of expectation for permanent staff here to have DELTA⁴ or Masters and the X centre is very generous in supporting its teachers to get further qualifications. So, quite a few of the teachers are either pursuing a DELTA or Masters, right now.

I: So I'm assuming my next question is actually redundant, have all of your teachers done a course or some kind of teaching language or languages?

R: All of them.

I: How many of your teachers do you think have done a course in teaching language or languages that includes an assessed teaching practice?

R: A CELTA, so I would say all of them.

I: Are.. this is just for clarity...Your courses are described in terms of learning levels. If, cos you said that they are, do they have statements that describe the different levels?

R: Yes.

I: And can you give me an example maybe of a statement? If you can't that's fine.

R: No, I can't think of one, but I can certainly show them to you after, I can't think of...

I: That's ok.

R: Like...no (laughs). I can't.[laughing]

I: Does your institution have documents that outline the content of each of your courses?

R: Academic, yes.

I: Ok, and if so, how detailed are these documents? Do they include specific language that has to be taught? If so, how is it described? So there's quite a few questions and I'll go through it again but I'll just go through it and you can get an overall view. Who is responsible for designing the documents? Do they make a reference to the nature of tests and examinations and do they include a list of objectives, outcomes, can-do statements...?

R: Right. General English, no. I don't believe they have anything. Academic English each level gets a student handbook at the beginning of a course. The teacher gives it to all the students and goes through it. Usually at the end of the first week, because in the first week there might be a bit of shuffling and changing and moving the classes and it goes through um it goes through the skills and a very brief description of the skills, so it might say 'reading' and it will say 'skimming, scanning, reading authentic texts, note taking, summarizing'. Writing it will say, at the higher levels it will say, which genres of writing they'll cover. It

doesn't have can-do statements, in academic. But it tells them clearly the assessment. It gives them a breakdown of the marks for.... So, it will tell them that the mid-block exam is worth whatever percentage, end block exam and research and there is a 5 % participation mark. So it gives them the break down. It doesn't tell them what skills they will be tested on. The teachers know which skills they are tested on and the teachers always go over the types that will be question types. Because they always do some kind of review before the assessments and there is not a teacher than can get away with not telling the students cos the students would pester them constantly anyway. So, that's quite clear and then it does tell them, you know, it tells them specifically that they have to get a minimum of 'c' in each skill to pass the level. So they are quite aware of that. And then it goes into some, oh... and there's a whole page on academic honesty and both in relation to the University of X and specifically what we do here at the X centre because that's quite important in academic, with plagiarism and cheating. So, they have a fair fairly comprehensive.

I: So, they get it at the start and you don't have to make sure that the staff is actually reading that they're implementing what's in the documents/ You assume that ...

R: That's a good question. So, I have two project leaders who report to me and they have very short meetings each week with their teams. So, at the moment it's divided, so one project leader is in charge of the Module 3 and 4 teachers and the other project leader is in charge of Module 1 and 2, and they have very short weekly meetings and they keep, make sure that everybody is on track, so they would say things like 'Has everybody gone over the...'. There's also a page at the end of the handbook that lists all the people they may need including myself, the project leaders and it will say 'My teacher's name is' and they fill in their teacher's name and email address of their teacher so that the students have that and there is also a page that the teachers have to get the students to fill out. It's some information on the students. So, there is a little bit of that but to what extend teachers, I suspect some teachers spend more time going through the document than others. Some teachers might expect the students to read it for themselves and some might go through it, I'm not exactly sure how it's delivered, but I know that it is definitely delivered.

I: *Would you say that the main focus of the majority of courses taught in the institute is grammar-based, tasks, vocabulary, language-skills, learning-skills or some combination of these?*

R: I would say a combination

I: *Does your institution implement any of the CEFR's recommendations and why or why not?*

R: I don't really know the answer to that.. But, I know that they've been looking at the Common European Framework and the, more for General English rather than Academic English, and they're looking at having individualized student study plans and they're looking at using the Common European Framework as sort of a reference to how they can look at the can-do statements and everything for General English.

I: *What professional development opportunities, if any, are provided for your teaching staff and if so how are decisions made about what to offer?*

R: Lots. So we, um, previously the school we had a different timetable and that meant that every teacher was not teaching Friday afternoon and we used to always run professional development on a Friday afternoon, every 2 weeks. Sometimes, it was in-house presentations and sometimes it was external speakers. Now, um, we have a split shift. We run classes from 8.30 to 5, so half the school studies from 8.30 to 12.45 and the other half studies from 12.45 to 5, which means that there are teachers, there is no common time anymore which is difficult, but the way that has been addressed for professional development is that it means everything is run twice. So, for teachers who teach in the afternoon they have professional development in the morning and those in the morning have it in the afternoon. But we've really expanded our approach to professional development this year so we have small working groups of 4 teachers and we meet every, I think it's once a month, and two teachers in the group are responsible for bringing whatever their discussion topic is to the group, so they may have read something or they're studying and they are gonna discuss a paper and they discuss it with the group and then someone reports to another project leader who does a little summary of what everyone has talked about and emails it out to the team. We still have external speakers come in. We recently had X... came in and spoke, cos X's relative works here, um and we will still have, oh we're running in-house workshops, so a

teacher can choose between two different workshops and they're in-house run and they can attend those. As well as, the school is assisting people with their studies both in terms of time and financial support. We have a teacher presenting at CLESOL this year and the school has financially supported her to go to that. I'm going to a conference in Australia this year and the school is supporting me to do that. So there's quite, we've taken a varied approach but everyone is encouraged and expected to participate in professional development. The school sees that as a very important part of what we do.

I: Do you think it is important that your teachers are aware of how the field or the area of language teaching has developed over time?

R: I think so, yeah, definitely, definitely, um we have quite a range of ages, qualification and experience and that's one of the nice things about these small sort of professional development groups, because you might have a really highly qualified and experienced teacher with a younger, lesser qualified, lesser experienced teacher and so, I often see that there's a lot of knowledge going both ways really. I think sometime people think 'Oh I have a lot of experience, they can learn everything from me.' But I think some people who are quite fresh and new to the industry a) have a lot more enthusiasm for those of us who have been in it a lot longer and yeah I think that is important and you do see sometimes people who've been doing it for a long time can get into a certain way of doing things and need a fresh look, fresh look. But it's harder, you know, when you've been doing something for, we recently had a teacher retire from here, and she'd been teaching for 44 years, not just ESOL, she's been a secondary school teacher and whatnot and, it is easy to get stuck in your ways of doing things.

I: Ok, so that's it for the questions, do you have any other comments you would like to make?

R: I don't think so, but I'm intrigued to see your research once it's done.

Beth

I[nterviewer]: So first of all, can you tell me which courses do you offer? For example, do you offer core language development courses, skills-specific, ESP or any other...?

R[espondent]: Ok, alright, we have, um, we're actually in a stage of transition, because, being a university, we need to be, um, we've been told, and you know the university vision, through TEC is that, um, you know, focus on undergraduate, postgraduate, so um, our English language programmes here have been reduced considerably and erm.... What we have now is, we have, um, a Certificate in English Language, which is run at Intermediate, High-intermediate and Advanced levels; Levels 4 and 5 with a very strong focus on the Academic English. So, preparing people for our undergraduate study, um they tend to have; they tend to have a skills based approach. So, focusing, you know, on Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Vocabulary development and the, you know, the micro-skills as well. But at the same time we do try and integrate. So that it's not, you know, so discrete, there is integration of topics. Is this helpful or not? (laughs)

I: Oh yes, that's excellent. That's what I...

R: This is one part of it, um, there's other parts.

I: And it will probably come up as I'll ask other questions. Can you tell me why you offer those particular courses?

R: Ok, because I mean there is the Certificate in English language courses. The Mission Statement was to help migrants and refugees settle successfully in New Zealand. So, it used to have a far wider brief, including socio-cultural information, you know, so that people have the survival skills really to be able to understand how to participate effectively in NZ society. The focus is increasingly less on that, and now its focus is very much on Academic English, and as I said the reason for that is because um that's the rule. Um I mean, really we shouldn't be having certificate courses at all, at the university. But we're trying to maintain our programmes and one of the ways we've done that is make it very academic, a very strong academic English orientation. So that the, so it's not community English anymore. It's English for.., in preparation for undergraduate studies. So we have the certificate English language programme. We have, I suppose you can call them ESP, really English for Certificate English for academic study which is,

you know,.. the special purpose being academic study. So that's the next level up. People start, people can enter at any point, they can start perhaps um in Certificate English Language and do academic English 1, academic English 2, then they can go into EAS cert, into EAS and then into undergraduate.

I: And can you tell me who makes decisions about what to put in the courses?

R: Um, well, ...I mean if we're talking currently, which is the academic English focus, it's the lecturers who are deciding what goes in and that's based on um their interactions. They're teaching at undergraduate level, so they know what the requirements are, their discussions with the lecturers in the undergraduate programmes, the discipline specialists. So that they know what the requirements are in terms of standard academic English requirements so and their own experience so that's really what they base the programme on.

I: And can you tell me in your opinion, do you think there is any difference between a proficiency-based course and a course that focuses on the outcomes that are language specific? And if so, what do you think the differences are?

R: So when you say proficiency-based, what are you meaning there?

I: Um, I'm thinking along the lines of training up for an IELTS or TOEFL, so, where it's proficiency not specific language as such.

R: Oh, ok, right. Um,.. well we certainly don't prepare our students for, um, just specifically for IELTS or TOEFL because we see that as being very limiting, actually. Because, um it's just an, those are just, indicators of proficiency at a point in time they don't, um. Preparation for that, doesn't help students to be able to study successfully at undergraduate level It's very limiting so, no. We, we, which, we have a very strong focus on being able to prepare students to be able to undertake successful study at undergraduate level and that's not just in terms of um, you know, the language proficiency required, the level of language required, but also in terms of being able to um use the institution's outline¹⁹. So online, comfortable with online, study skills, time management all those kind of things as well. So that's kind of,... Does that help?

I: Yes, yes it does. And you said that you do offer what you call skills-specific courses, right?

R: Hm, yeah, yeah, but they are integrated as well.

I: Ok, so are the different skills-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year, are they taught by the same person or different people?

R: Well, tend, we tend to have, people tend to kind of specialise or have an interest in a particular area. So they might be more interested in the oral skills or in the writing and they develop, you know, expertise in that area and if they wish to continue then, then of course, you know, we want to..., people to do what they feel their strengths are and what they enjoy, um but then on the other hand sometimes timetabling can mean that people who were perhaps focusing on oral might need to do reading and vocabulary development. So, we expect our lecturers in the English language area to be fairly versatile and to be able to pick up different things if required.

I: Do you believe that skills-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year should be closely linked?

R: Oh yes, oh I, oh well I think that it's and that's why we do it, because the language and the skills are then reinforced. If you have um, I mean what we try to do is to have topics that are relevant to the students. So, there's a context, you know, and then, you know, in oral and in writing and in reading it would be reinforced, um so no, not so tight yeah, yes.

I: And what sort of things do you think should be taught in a writing course? And could you give me an example?

R: Um, ok. Um, well I mean,.. I think there are different approaches in our sc..., in our school, um but certainly in terms of the English language preparation around undergrad study I think there's probably still a strong emphasis on building up students' expertise and um starting with, you know, smaller pieces of writing and then building up to paragraph and building up to essay. We really believe that it's important to give students feedback and then we believe in one-to one feedback too, if we can. So not just, you know, comments on a thing. So, one-to-one feedback, so that the students are really able to integrate the feedback and then um they are often, not always,.. depends on the lecturer, but they are often asked, I know to do the essay or whatever it is again integrating the feedback. So, that it's kind of a draft...., it's a process. The other thing that is probably important to know too, is that in our English language department we also teach what we call

academic literacies. So, um, not we call it, that's what it's called 'academic literacies', and that's where we teach really um the language um that's required in different, not just the language, the language and, English language and academic skills really, required in other discipline areas so we have academic literacies for Hospitality, for Maths and Computing, for Social Sciences and what that involves, really, is our lecturers using the context of the discipline area to teach and improve language,... academic literacies

I: So in relation to the previous question, I think you partly answered it, but what sort of things do you think your teachers generally teach in writing courses?

R: Um, I think they teach about, I think they teach a bit of a genre, have a bit of a genre-based approach so they look at the requirements for example of an essay and a particular discipline and what are the features of that and then they look at models, um they also, I think there is some grammar teaching that goes on, but I don't think that that's as strong a focus as it has been in the past. Um, there is quite a lot of emphasis on um, yeah, on vocabulary, being able to use the appropriate vocabulary, you know, the, in terms of register and etc. Um what else? (Laughs) Uh I have to dig deep into my memory to think what else they do. I mean I can show you some curriculum documents, I can get some curriculum documents. I mean you should be speaking to the programme leaders; they've got more knowledge than I have.

I: So you mentioned about language, do you think that language rules in a course should be taught explicitly, implicitly or not at all?

R: Oh, I'm a great believer, this is just my personal view, about explicit. Draw your attention, focus on form.

I: And in relation to the previous question, what do you think your teachers generally do?

R: I would say that most of them are, do, um yeah, would would follow that explicit approach, because it, we are very strong believers in um I think generally people really adhere to, you know, Rod Ellis, other people like that, who talk about the importance of focus on form, noticing um the need for input and output in order to develop language proficiency. So I think people are very much, adhere to those philoso..., that philosophy, that approach.

I: In a core language course, how much time do you think teachers should spend on teaching new language and practicing using new language, so input and output?

R: Mmh ok, well, you see, in my personal view I think um in a 2-hour session I would say, and this is because I've been involved in language teacher education. So, so I've become, I became increasingly aware of the need for recycling language and reviewing, because otherwise it's lost and it doesn't, I'm not saying that we need to repeat exactly the same content, cos that's just boring. But we do need to create opportunities. I think for 50% of the time, really, we need to be creating opportunities for students to um really reuse the language that they've come across before. The new vocabulary, the structures etc... so that they become kind of integrated into them.

I: Now, again in relation to that previous question, how much times do you think, your teachers generally spend on teaching new language and practicing new language?

R: Yeah, you see, I'd have to ask them, so I don't know, but I would imagine, um, I would imagine that an experienced teacher would probably do that, yeah, yeah. But I'd need to ask them, because it's just my opinion.

I: Does the content of your courses offered vary a lot from year to year?

R: Not really, no, no. Um in the past when we did the more General English to help new migrants to, you know, and refugees to settle successfully so, um it had a partial community focus as well. Um, then what we did every year, what our lecturers do, an important part of their programme, is to do an initial needs assessment where they not just look at, you know, the level that the students are at, but also what their goals are and what the person, the students say their needs are, um... So, based on that, there was always some variety because you'd have different groups and different needs. Now that we are very much focused on academic English, um, that's far less so, because the requirements are, you know, fairly obvious. So, although teachers might, lecturers might,.. do a needs assessment which incorporates goals, finding out when or where the students might want to end up, um the course is perhaps not as flexible.

I: Tell me, do your teachers use text books?

R: They do, but they don't, generally they don't, not all of them, i mean they could if they wanted to, but they are very focused on meeting the needs of their students and so they tend to use, um, have an eclectic approach where we, and I mean we have probably the biggest resource room in the country of text books and people um take what they feel is,.. stuff from here and stuff from there, to make a course for the students.

I: And if teachers do use text books how are they selected?

R: Oh they select according to, you know, whatever it is that they are teaching that they feel the text book or, you know, whether it's listening exercises or whether it's um, you know, reading or whatever. They would just depending on what they think is...um, yeah

I: I'm going to move away from that to assessments...Who sets assessments for the students during the course and at the end of the course?

R: Generally the, well it's usually, it's the programme that has decided what the assessments are. So, it's, and they're set assessments. Changes can be made but it has to go through a process of discussion with the other lecturers and that particular team so we've got a team of lecturers. They do,.. but it's not just one or two lecturers saying 'oh I want to make a change here'. There is a process that needs to be gone through and the changes are discussed and it may be that the team, um, I mean yeah generally what people want to do they can, but as I say there is a process for it.

I: How is the content of the end of the course testing exams determined?

R: Ah, well, we don't really have exams, we have assessments that students do. One of our programmes is competency-based, so, students have assessments on the way and so there's no final exam actually for any of our English language courses, we we're not great believers in final exams.

I: Now the next question might not be relevant for you because of what you earlier said, are there any courses offered by the institution that you would be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test, such as IELTS?

R: No, not really. No, no. I mean I have every confidence in the um in the reliability erm and the rigor of our testing processes. Our lectures are very experienced; some of them are IELTS examiners. They teach in other graduate areas as well, so we've got that to and fro. No, I don't think we need to...

I: Just moving on to qualifications now. What qualifications does the institute expect teachers to have as a minimum?

R: Minimum Masters now. In Applied Linguistic obviously, or a related area, yeah.

I: Have all the teachers done a course of some kind in teaching language or languages?

R: Yes. Um, not all of them will have done a Masters, but I would say probably 90%?

I: And how many of the teachers do you think have done a course in teaching language or languages that includes an assessed teaching practice?

R: Um, probably 90%?

I: And are your courses described in terms of levels? And if so, do you have statements that describe the different levels?

R: Yes, we do. They are described in terms of levels. And there are indeed statements.

I: Can you give me one example?

R: I would have to find one for you (laughs). I can send it to you (laughs). I don't know off the top of my head.

I: I just wondered if it was 'can-do' statements or...

R: Yeah, yes, yes, the ones that I think off, can-do statements, yes. I thought you wanted me to kind of quote.

I: Does your institution have documents that outline the content of each of your courses?

R: Uh, yes we do. Yeah, yeah.

I: Ok, and if so...

R: ...but some flexibility for lecturers as well, yeah.

I: And so, you do have documents, how detailed do you think the documents are and do they include specific language that has to be taught?

R: Not specific language, probably, no. They're fairly detailed, but, no, I actually haven't looked at them for a little while, but I doubt that it will be kind of right down to the specifics, yeah. No, no. I mean certainly, like, I mean, the Academic Word List is in there and, but not specifically.

I: And can I ask you who's responsible for designing the documents, those lecturers as well?

R: Yes, and they've been around for a while and they're reviewed from time to time.

I: What do you do, if anything is done here, to make sure that all of your teaching staff have read the documents that you have available for the staff?

R: Ok, um, curriculum documents you mean?

I: Yeah.

R: Um, I don't know for sure, but um it is ensured. (laughs) Um, we have programme leaders and they will make sure that um yeah I don't know that the lecturers, I mean lecturers tend to stay in a particular area, when they move to a new area then they will get the documentation and read through it but otherwise, I don't know. They have programme handbooks too actually, so, yeah.

I: Would you say that the main focus of the majority of the courses taught is grammar, task, vocabulary, language-skills, learning-skills, or some combination of these?

R: A combination, yeah. No, a combination, because we don't just do language and we don't just do um grammar. No, definitely not just grammar, not just vocabulary either. I mean you can't. So it has to be a combination.

I: Does the institute implement any of the Common European Framework of Reference recommendations?

R: Uh, I don't know I'd have to go and have a look (laughs).

I: What professional development opportunities, if any, are provided for the teaching staff? And if you do have professional development, how are decisions made about what to offer?

R: Ok, um, we, we're very fortunate to have a very, I think, generous professional development entitlement for our lecturers. Um they have, they can access up to two weeks for a full-time person of professional development time and up to \$1200 per annum. They can also do any programme here at the institution for free. So, they can enroll in, as long as it's relevant to their work, I mean you know they can't go off and do...but, um, so a number of our staff have taken opportunity to up-skill and taken on Masters, some are doing um doctorates at the moment. So that's very generous in addition to the \$1200 they can access those programmes.

The \$1200 can be used to attend conferences, can be used to, um, generally it's used to attend conferences actually. And people can attend actually, without even having to present, with their professional development entitlement. They can also access um funding from the Faculty to undertake research, to get time for research, to get time to go to an overseas conference, but then of course they have to present. There's huge opportunities.

I: Do you think it's important for the teachers to be aware of the field of the area of English language teaching in terms of how it has developed over time?

R: I think it's useful to know where we've come from. Yes, and I think most people do have a, um, yes. And of course, by being able to attend conferences and undertake professional... the other thing that we have in terms of professional development, we have um a huge resource, online resource through our library, we have one of the best databases in the country, in terms of access to journals. So people can go and read, so people have the opportunity to keep up to date. So, all our people, most people would know where we've come from but they're also keeping up to date through conferences and through professional development. What I didn't answer before was about professional development how people decide. Um, it's actually very much people's own decision, it's up to them what they decide to do. Um sometimes, the odd time, I have said 'No, I don't think so' (laughs), but because, for example, somebody who was learning an additional language themselves, so learning German for example, and we don't teach German here, she is an English language teacher, I think it's really useful for people to learn an additional language, so they know what it's like to be a learner etc. but this was her kind of fifth year and she wanted the university to pay for that and I said 'No, actually I think it's really good that you've done it, but I think now we, in the institution, we have a greater need for people to up-skill in the area of online or whatever. So, no we won't. You go ahead and do it if you want to, but we will not be paying for it.'

I: And, that's it and I just want to know if you have any other comments you wish to make?

R: I don't think so, no....erm. ...I think the other thing that we really try to do in terms of preparing students for academic study is in a tradition to, um, you know, the language skills and the study skills and the online, which is increasingly

important, is that they also need to learn how to work in pairs and groups and that's something else that we, that we work on because at the university, at the undergraduate level, around the university, group work is a really important feature. So, I think that's all. I hope that's helpful.

Carol

I[nterviewer]: First of all I'm going to look at overall, what the programmes are. Can you tell me which courses you offer here, so for example core language development courses, skills specific ESP or other ESP courses like business language?

R[espondent]: Ok, so we offer core English courses, so we offer all those English courses and they range from starter class right up to an advanced class, we offer English for academic purposes and that starts from quite a low level as well and goes up to university entrance. We offer teacher-training courses in the form of the TKT Cambridge exam and up until this year the Trinity Certificate, but we've just been accredited to do the CELTA exam, so we'll be doing that from August. Um we're hoping to... we do business course um but we don't have any exams attached to that, so we're hoping to get BEC going in the next little while and we also do lots of specialist groups. So, for example, we might have a group that comes from Japan and they want to do um general (pause) they integrate with other classes and then they might go on and do um like TOEFL or teacher, we have lots of teacher training groups that come from Korea or Japan mostly, China, to do courses like that.

I: OK, can you tell me why you think those courses are chosen. Is there sort of some standard or...?

R: Why...

I: Why have those particular courses been chosen? Have been chosen here?

R: Have been chosen here? Um, I think the two, they're like the two main ones that are general, there's mainly say...there's the general English and academic English. Ok, basically we're the University of X and so our prime job is to feed people into the university. Often people don't have enough English to start on an academic programme so we have the general English programme working onsite. But then some students actually just want to come for 3 weeks or 5 weeks or... and improve their English generally and they're not actually going to study in English so... And also, I think we also offer the general English programme courses also for some of the Japanese universities will actually give them credit for having studied for this many hours so they study in General English so the idea is to improve their speaking and listening which is not so easy to do in Japan.

I: Can you tell me who makes decisions about what to include in each course?

R: Ok, um the academic programme, it's.... the decisions are primarily made with X [the academic manager] and, but in conjunction with the Z Department¹⁸. So the course is basically developed by X and then the Z Department ... they moderate our course and moderate our programme. The General English programmes, I can't actually say there is em an actual curriculum for those courses. Although we've just brought in a writing curriculum, so that the teachers are all studying, that the students are doing a selection of different types of writing and that is erm.... that is... the person who makes those decisions is the senior teacher for general English in conjunction with ... um... other teachers. We kind of decide, yeah, but the actual curriculum for General English is actually very much..., it's very loose, because the st., it's not like you've been here for this many weeks so you've done this kind of things, cos it depends on the students and the class at the time. And we, we encourage the teachers to adapt materials and use materials but they basically are using our course book.

I: Now, is there in your opinion any difference between a proficiency-based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are more language specific? For example, like the students will be able to use past perfect or...

R: Ah yeah, I think there is...

I: ...and if so what do you think is the difference?

R: Ah yes, there is a very big difference. So IELTS is a proficiency test and so you're basically teaching the skills to do that test um and also I think a lot of the academic programmes are like that as well so, can you listen to this lecture and can you take notes? ..yeah um... that's why our, generally, English courses are quite loose, because they might already have seen the present perfect a million times but they can't actually, they know it, but they can't actually use it so it's more sort of skills based.

I: Now if you offer, cos you say you do offer like more skills based courses, are different skills specific course taught to the same group of students in the same year, are they taught by the same person or by different people?

R: Oh they can be either; they can be taught by the same person or by different people. We always try to have someone who has done it before. Like so, say our Module 4 course, which is our top academic course. Someone wouldn't just go in

there new they always go in with a buddy, someone who taught it. There might be two courses, so one person might be new and the other person's taught it several times and then we get that person trained up and then bring another new person in.

I: Ok, um, do you believe that skill-specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same year, should, do you think they should be closely linked if one person is teaching perhaps listening and read... listening and speaking?.. and other teaching reading and writing

R: I think there definitely needs to be collaboration between teachers, absolutely, yes.

I: And, what sort of things do you believe should be taught in a writing course and could you give me an example?

R: Ok, well basically, like for an academic course we would look at what they're needing to do at the university. So, if they're needing to write a research essay or.....a lot of our students now go on and do PhDs so they need to be able to do annotated bibliographies and that kind of thing or summary writing and paraphrasing. So, it depends on purpose really. In the General English, more core skills course, I think we've now made a curriculum. So, we've some 'can-do' statements from the European Framework, from the European Framework, so they're saying like 'a student at elementary should be able to, they can do this, and they can fill in a form and they can do whatever it is. They can write a simple letter, they can...' So we've actually made a curriculum around the Common European Framework. But only for writing, not for anything else, and why that is, I don't know. (laughs)

I: Interesting... Um, so in relation to this, to the question about writing, what sort of, cos you gave me your view, what sort of things do you think your teachers generally teach in writing courses?

R: Ok, well again, that has been very very loose. Different teachers teach whatever, depending on what they like. So for example, we've got a teacher here who loves poetry and poems and dramas so his students tend to write lots of role plays and that kind of thing whereas you know a teacher who's got more of a business bias might actually teach them how to write a letter of complaint or something else. So that's why we've tried to, that's why we've changed the

academic courses more around...., like Module 1 is like writing a decent paragraph, Module 2 is writing a simple essay with, a structured essay and some summary writing, Module 3 is getting into um writing different kinds of essay like problem-solution, compare and contrast and paraphrasing. We introduce paraphrasing, and then module 4 is extending these out further and they write actually a 1500 word "research" essay.. (laugh)

I: Now, do you think that language rules should be taught explicitly, implicitly or not at all?

R: (pause) Um, I think both, implicitly and explicitly um because um a lot of students don't, um I mean, basically I think implicitly, but I think a lot of students don't notice and so I think they need to kind of, yeah.

I: And so just with regard to that question, what do you think your teachers generally do, do they teach it explicitly, implicitly or....?

R: I think it varies, yeah, I think it varies. I think some people **love** teaching grammar.

I: (whispers) Passion...

R: Yeah it's their passion, and they love teaching grammar and then they use that as the hook to build the language in and I think other people do it the other way round.

I: Ok, so in a core language development course how much time do you think teachers should spend on teaching the new language and practicing using the new language...broadly?

R: Broadly? Um...

I: Do you think one should weigh more than the other?

R: Um, I think practicing is more important than learning, yeah, because when you practice then more language will come out.

I: Ok and um and again with regard to the previous question how much time do you think your teachers generally spend on teaching new language and practicing new language?

R: Ok, I think um teaching new language will be much less than practicing, yeah.

I: So it follows with what you think. Can you tell me whether the content of the courses offered by the institution vary a lot from year to year? Or does it tend to remain the same?

R: Um I think the general language courses change from almost week to like, from block to block and week to week, because it depends on, if you've got a class full of Brazilian students or lots of Brazilian students then or Saudi Arabian students they love to speak and then so you actually need to, you don't need to, you don't need to teach a lot of sort of confidence-building speaking kind of, cos they already have that, but you need to teach um sort of grammatical structures and writing and those kinds of skills. So yeah I think it varies. In the General English programme, the academic programme, I think we have a curriculum. We vary the curriculum a little bit, like we tutee with it a little, and we don't make dramatic leaps because we've sort of, we have an endpoint in view, yeah. Whereas in the General English programme it depends on the students and what they want, like, so I mean I've had a class of students who were not interested in writing at all, like they were just here for fun, a good time, to learn some English, to meet students from other languages, from other countries and, you know, that's what they, yeah that's what they enjoy.

I: Ok, so just moving towards textbooks now. Do your teachers use textbooks?

R: The General English programme they, the core, they have a core class and then they have a second class. So the core class has got a text book so that will be something like 'New Headway', 'Cutting Edge' or something which the teacher will use as a basis for their course but they could supplement as much as they, they can supplement as much as they like, so as long as they teach the kind of main things and then they have a choice of a topics-based course and those are all developed in-house. So topics-based as a skills-based course and the topics for one week might be for example sport and so there will be a reading, a writing, a listening and a speaking lesson in that week, all based around the topic of sport and the next week might be movies and the next week might be health, music that kind of thing, so they are all written in-house, it's all written in-house. Business course is based on a textbook but the teacher adapts a lot and puts lots of task-based stuff into it.

I: Now, with regard to the textbooks, how are they selected and by whom?

R: Um, they're selected by, I think we have a range, like an Oxford one and there's an Oxford, we do an Oxford one, a Cambridge one and a Longman one. And there's no real reason, we don't say one is better than another, but it's just

there's a different approach. (pause) And, sorry, the academic courses, all the material is written in-house. So, it's all written in-house, yeah. Because there isn't there are no good, and I've just been, I went on a benchmarking trip to Australia earlier in the year, with looking at the other direct entry programmes into the universities and they said the same there is no, cos I was trying to work out what materials they were using and how they compared with ours and they all write their own because there is no, there are no good books yeah. Which is surprising.

I: Now, just a couple of questions about assessments. Who sets assessments for students, like during the courses and at the end of the courses?

R: Ok. In the academic programme the academic team does it in conjunction with the Department of Y. In the General English programme they are all written in-house and they're modified slightly as things go along. Um and we test um grammar and vocabulary and then the four skills.

I: And the student course?

R: Yeah and who does that, the senior teacher for General English.

I: And, I think you kind of answered this, how is the content of end of course tests or exams determined?

R: Ok, the content of the academic courses is determined by, well like say Module 4 we know the end point where it's got to be and then so Module 3 it's kind of that step below and so that's, ... we have the end point in mind. So who determines for general English? They're taken from the Common European Framework um descriptors and they may not match entirely because they don't entirely like match with into elementary print and, but they kind of are taken from there. So, students at upper and intermediate level should be able to write or writing should be, ... they can write in an organized way, they can organize their writing they can do this so that's the kind of thing and the descriptors are based on those as well, yeah.

I: Now, are there any courses, just shifting it a bit towards testing, are there any courses offered by your institution that you'd be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test such as IELTS, rather than an internal exam?

R: Um, yeah...

I: And if so, which types of courses do you...

R: Okay, so the academic courses could, we actually say, I think [R1].... probably told you this, we say that Module F...we have a Foundation Certificate in English, which is equivalent to an IELTS course, so if they get an *A* it's equivalent to an IELTS 7, if they get a *B* it's a 6.5 and if they get a *C* it's a 6, and we're constantly trying to make sure that our course is actually aligned with IELTS, because that's the entry requirement for university.

I: Okay so, just a bit about the teachers, what qualifications do you expect the teachers to have as a minimum?

R: Ok, so we don't employ anybody without a CELTA. Unless there's somebody like X who's got an equivalent of a CELTA, like Y equivalent. So, something along those lines. The people teaching on the Foundation Certificate all should have Masters degrees and we encourage all our teachers to have Post Grad diplomas and be working towards Masters degrees, yeah.

I: How many of the teachers do you think have done a course in teaching language or languages that includes assessed teaching practice?

R: Assessed teaching practice...

I: So like what CELTA has

R: Oh yeah, everybody, everybody.

I: Can I ask you, if your courses are described in terms of levels and if so do you have statements that describe the different levels?

R: Yes, we do.

I: And could you perhaps give me an example of one?

R: Ok, so yes we do. We have like say, say an elementary course and I think the descriptor is something like

I: Just an idea...

R... 'this course um presents the basic structures in English and bla bla bla' and then intermediate might be 'this course has build on the foundations of English' and the advanced course it would be like 'extends the...' so they're kind of pretty broad descriptions I have to say. (laughs) But we do have descriptors and the Module, the academic courses definitely have descriptors for each level.

I: Does the institution have documents that outline the content of each of your courses? Now, there are a couple of questions within this, so first of all does the

institution have documents that outline the content of each of the courses? If so, how detailed do you think the documents are?

R: Ok, for academic courses I think they're quite detailed because every week has specific aims. The General English courses are much broader descriptors but there are descriptors, yeah.

I: So for the academic that you think has more specific aims, how are they described there, the specific language that is being taught, how is it described? You know is it a can-do statement or is it...?

R: It's like um ..'the aim of this course', or 'this course teaches' or something like this, so yeah it's outcome based.

I: And who's responsible for designing these documents?

R: Um, well I guess X does it and in conjunction with, I'm overall responsible for that.

I: Can you tell me how you make sure, or what do you do to make sure that all of your teaching staff have read the documents, these documents that you have available?

R: Um, they have meetings every week, like the academic ones, cos they're very specific. They have meetings every week and if they're for the next week, well these are the aims for the course or this is what we need to do. The general language ones are, as I explained, are looser.

I: So, just generally, would you say that the main focus of the majority of courses taught here is grammar-tasks, vocabulary, language-skills, learning-skills or some combination of these?

R: Language skills I think, yeah.

I: Does the institute implement any of the CEF references...

R: We do, in terms of...

I: Why?

R: Why? Ok, because there is nothing better (laughs).

I: I like that (laughs)

R: Yeah, ok, because it's the best set of descriptors that we could find basically and we only use them for writing and I don't know why we don't use them for, oh I suppose we do, but we find that listening and speaking just automatically gets taught and absorbed somehow, but writing, yeah there is more and so we're using

them specifically for writing but yeah I don't think there is anything better out there. There is an Australian version I think, but I guess yeah.

I: Do you think it is important that your teachers are aware of how the field or area of English language teaching has developed over time?

R: Yeah I think so, I think so. I think..cos we have quite a strong professional development kind of programme operating here. And everyone's encouraged to do Masters Degrees, we have like sort of cell groups of people getting together. We have speakers coming in and we also have, cos we've got a manage..., a performance management system for teachers which is quite tricky, because teachers don't like to be performance measured. But we've got a set of descriptors and students actually; we evaluate the teachers against those descriptors. So, for example, there is one about interaction in the classroom, so when we observe the teacher and we say 'ok so there was, that student spoke for one minute in that whole hour' and so they would get a substandard score for that. Or 'their interaction was only for one minute and that's all', so we have descriptors in there based on British council um descriptors for teachers. Yeah, you might have seen those.

I: Yes.

R: They are very good.

I: Yes. So that's it, are there any other comments that you'd still like to add?

R: No, I think, I think we offer a range of programmes and so we have to be adaptable I think the academic programme is quite firm in that we know where we are going. The general English programme operates, um, it's a little bit like topsy. It's kind of grown but we've just tried to tighten it up in terms of writing and then the group work that we've, the groups that we've got. So, for example, now we've got a group from Hong Kong, from Z University and their aim is to come and it's kind of like a finishing 6 weeks on the end of their degree and so they've come here and the whole purpose is that they actually learn more about cultural interchanges and so they are integrated into classes. Then they have a choice of businesses or topics or IELTS or and then they are actually doing a volunteer programme. So they are going to hospitals and kindergartens and stuff, like helping out, so that's kind of like for them,... and down to the ZZ and places like that. So they kind of like, the idea is to get, yeah kind of like a rounding out so

we've got both those kind of courses too and they are quite, they have quite specific aims, they have quite specific purposes. Often those purposes are designed by the university that they've come from and the students are really just here to have a good time (laughs). And they have a bit of fun and a bit of, so often there is a mismatch between what the university sends them on and is expecting them to achieve and what they want to do, but that's ok.

I: Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

Dawn

I[nterviewer]: First of all I am going to ask you about which courses you offer. So for example, do you offer core language development courses, skill-specific courses or ESP courses or any other types of courses apart from those?

R[espondent]: So, well, for Levels 1 to 4 it's grammar based, Levels 5 to 7 it's skill-based.

I: And can you tell me why you offer these courses? Why these particular ones?

R: Um, I suppose 1 to 4 you're developing the, to get target language, all right? For the grammar, so that they've got that for writing, um, we're developing, though we also develop skills in listening and reading and speaking.

I: Do you offer any other courses apart from these, at the institute?

R: (pause) There is General English.

I: And do you have anything like groups...

R: There is groups also, yes, general English and groups, but, yeah, my involvement is only with the Certificate of Attainment in English language.

I: Who makes decisions about what to include in each of the courses?

R: At the moment it is me in consultation with, um teachers and team leaders.

I: And how are the decisions made, do you have meetings, do you have documents that you send around?

R: Usually meetings.

I: In your opinion is there any difference between proficiency based courses and a focus on courses that have outcomes that are language specific? So for example language specific will be where you say the students will be able to use Past Perfect for event...

R: Which we do have. And then (pause) sorry what was the...

I: Do you think there is a difference between proficiency based courses and courses that are language specific?

R: Well it should be a combination of both though.

I: So you think it must be a combination of both?

R: Oh I would think so. Yeah, I would think you're sort of expecting a certain amount of proficiency, yeah, as well as, I mean using that language if it's language based, I mean there has to be proficiency in it, yeah.

I: Do you offer any skills specific courses so that you have maybe reading and writing taught by one person and listening and speaking let's say taught by another person?

R: In the afternoon programme they are.

I: And are these different skills specific courses taught to the same group of students in the same course or the same semester by the same person or by different people?

R: By the same, so like if it was reading and writing, if it was reading and writing intermediate, we might have, we can have up to two teachers on a programme. So it might be one, it could be two teachers, just depends. Well they can only ever, if they're doing that for their 12-week course, they can only choose 1 option for that whole 12 weeks. So they can't do 2 weeks of this, 2 weeks of that, or 2 weeks of the next thing.

I: Do you believe that skills specific courses that are taught to the same group of students in the same block, should be closely linked and in what way do you think?

R: Well the skills we offer would be reading and writing, reading and writing and grammar as one option, another one would be listening, speaking, pronunciation...

I: So there wouldn't be [pause] sort of...

R: No, there is no linking between the two, no.

I: And what sort of things do you believe should be taught in a writing course and could you give me an example?

R: Well with the lower levels, we're trying to use the language, the target language, that they've done. So they're focusing on present simple and then the essay is going to be in the present simple, if they've done something to do with past simple, plus also related to their, the topics that they have been studying in the book. That's more say at levels 1-3. At level 4, we're looking at different essay types, problem solution, cause effect, compare contrast. So we are looking at the language and because the book limits us in the topics we then choose general topics, ok? At level 5 it is then closely related to the book and perhaps more academic or like an IELTS Task 2. By level 6 and 7 of course then it's into

the research as far as the writing goes. So there's summarizing, paraphrasing, writing bibliographies as tests to support the actual research writing.

I: With regard to that question what sort of things do your teachers generally teach in their writing courses?

R: Well it's going to be the grammar, the structure of the essay. So our writing is very guided at the lower levels, ok? So we're trying to teach them to really just group ideas and paragraphs. So they are given paragraph headings, right, that's it, say 1, 2. By level 3 we are introducing topic sentences, so the idea of supporting evidence to go with that, similarly in level 4 and then of course through, yeah.

I: Do you think that language rules should be taught explicitly, implicitly or not at all?

R: Again, you see, I believe in combinations. I don't ever see one thing as being, yeah, a one way to do it.

I: So, with regard to that, what do you think the teachers generally do at the institute?

R: Because the writing is so guided they um, (pause), when you say explicitly what do you...

I: ...Specifically mean? I'm saying that they are taught this particular grammar explicitly, like they are taught this is how it functions, this is how, where you find it, this is the structure, but if it's taught implicitly it's like they are taught around other information and that comes out as you're teaching.

R: No, because, see, they're taught the grammar, so then they are expecting that to be in the writing.

I: So it's taught mostly explicitly then.

R: Yeah (hesitantly)

I: Ok.

R: Yeah, I was gonna say, because no, because yeah, um.

I: Because if that's what they do then possibly it's more explicitly, there is clearly a focus, a language focus.

R: But it's not all a language focus that's the thing, so yeah.

I: So it is a combination?

R: Yeah, it is really, yeah.

I: In the core language development courses that you spoke about, how much time do you think teachers should spend on teaching new language and practicing using new language?

R: Well I suppose the more practice they have the better. So ideally you would want something like, about a 30:70.

I: With 30 the language focus?...

R: Yeah and as much practice as possible, yeah.

I: With regard to your response to that question, what do you think the language teachers here actually do?

R: I think it would be pretty much that. Yes. And certainly from observations, because I mean, we observe the teachers and I can speak for myself and also we have meetings and erm..erm feedback and I would think that's what the majority are doing.

I: And does the content of the courses offered by the institute vary a lot from year to year?

R: No. It's being updated all the time.

I: But it doesn't vary much?

R: No.

I: Do the teachers use textbooks?

R: Yes

I: And if they are using textbooks, how are they selected and by who are they selected?

R: Basically by me because we don't actually have an academic manager as such now. But that would be in consultation with teachers, if something new comes up we would look into purchasing that, which we have done, say at level, well level 5, we did change from Quest, because we thought, yeah it wasn't quite so good. Looked at other books, um, level 6 again the teachers who taught it, um there was a new Quest book, so we looked at that to decide 'do we keep that, do we change to something else?'. So basically that's what it is, yeah.

I: Who sets the assessment for students? For example, during courses, and then at the end of courses?

R: They are set. Ok, so again there are things that we're just updating all the time in relation to topics in the book.

I: So who updated them?

R: The coordinators or the team leaders, yeah.

I: How is the content of each of the courses in the tests determined?

R: Well we have three reading tests, so we do decide how many questions, types of questions, um, yeah same for the listening test.

I: So does that relate to the textbook that they are using?

R: Yes. Well with the reading it's topics and language. So if we're looking sort of at the readability statistics that would be at that level whatever we have worked out for level 3 then the reading would be at that level and just common question types.

I: Are there any courses offered here that you would be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test like an IELTS rather than an internal exam, internal test?

R: (pause) Well our tests are sort of a mixture of proficiency plus, like...

I: I'm thinking of this because it is an outside test, like IELTS....

R: Yeah, no I, no. Because they are sort of one-off type things and I think we're testing throughout our course, things that are useful for students to build on to go to university.

I: Moving away from testing now, what qualifications do you expect the teachers to have as a minimum?

R: CELTA or PostGradand, gosh, I'd actually have to go into that, we do have a document that actually states that, what they are required to have. Sometimes, when we get a CV we'll just go through it and usually, not always, the teaching degree or experience yeah, but I don't quote me on that, because I would have to go and find the document, yeah, but it is actually quite clearly stated what they should have, yeah.

I: And have all the teachers done a course of some kind in teaching language or languages?

R: Certainly in CAEL, yes.

I: And how many of the teachers do you think have done a course in teaching language or languages that included an assessed teaching practice compound?

R: When you say an assessed, what ...

I: Like, they teach in class and they get assessed on the practical aspects of...

R: Well, all of them. All in CAEL because they have to either have CELTA or a PGDip.

I: Where they've had a practical...so not a PGDip where there is no practical?

R: Yes, yeah. Oh we did have one GE teacher who would have done, who is through Massey, we had on CAEL. But then, you see, we can observe the teachers also, so that we, we were really happy, yes but other than that, no, I think all the CAEL teachers yeah.

I: And are the courses described in terms of Levels and if so, do you have statements that describe the different levels?

R: Yes.

I: And can you give me an example of how you would describe the different levels?

R: Ok, oh this might be the quickest, because it is in the university calendar there is one thing. We have our outcome descriptors...just a moment and I'll actually just show you, it's probably easier...[calls up the descriptors on the computer] Ok, so that is what is in the university paper, that is what is a general outcome and then all the specific learning objectives from there. Ok, for the different levels, so yeah.

I: Does the institute have documents that outline the content of each of the courses?

R: Yeah, we do.

I: If so, how detailed do you think these documents are, so do they include specific language that's to be taught?

R: I would think they do, um if we actually look at [looks at computer]....now these are actually sort of set, so these are what we have, so the topics and text is the function, structures, the different skills and the assessment.

I: How are they described, if they include specific language how are they described? So is it like 'can-do' statements or...

R: No, not for that. In our learning objectives which I showed you before, they well they're the outcome, but no it's not as far as this overview goes.

I: And who's responsible for designing the documents?

R: Ok that was done by X¹ when, yeah and with the team leaders, alright?

I: So you got somebody, at what sort of position?...that worked with the team leaders?

R: Well, what was X called?

I: But there was one person who was in charge and then organized...

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: And do they make reference in these documents to the nature of the tests and exams?

R: Yes.

I: So they are all part of the same document?

R: Yes.

I: And do they include objectives, oh you said they don't include objectives like 'can-do' statements.

R: No. When you say like here is the assessment so there they would learn to use the marking key to self-correct their first draft of their essay, so then they would write the second and third drafts, yeah.

I: What does the institute do to make sure that all of the teaching staff have read these documents? Do they get it when they start on a course?

R: They do and we start off with meetings, we have in between blocks, so they are in there, What the level we assume they are going to teach, and they meet together, they sit down with me, we go through the planner, they are given all the documents we have, our information manuals, they get everything like that. And then they work together as a team, and usually have meetings often, once a week.

I: And would you say that the main focus of the majority of the courses taught here is mainly grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language skills, learning skills or some combination of these?

R: Combination.

I: Moving away from the documents.....does the institute implement any of the Common European Framework of Reference Recommendations?

R: No.

I: And can you maybe tell me, why not?

R: Well when you say, um, can you give me some specific examples of the European Framework, say I mean they have, where they've got criteria or descriptors or the rubrics, we have used those.

I: So the assessment rubrics?

R: Yes.

I: But you've not used the 'can-do' statement part of the documents?

R: No.

I: Moving away from that....What professional development opportunities, if any, are provided for the teaching staff?

R: Every Friday, in between blocks, plus if there's courses teachers want to go to they can apply.

I: Apart from the courses teachers can apply for, how are decisions made about what to offer at the professional development sessions?

R: Ok, so one is made by student learning support, the other one is made from the observations..erm the coordinators, team leaders have done of the teachers. So, where we see, right there's a need for certain things then we will offer that plus anything new that might sort of come up that would be, you know, is of general interest.

I: Do you think that it is important that teachers are aware of how the field or area of English language teaching has developed over time?

R: Well, I'd think so, yes.

I: Can you tell me, does the centre do something to ensure that?

R: (pause) When you say how it's developed over time, yeah, cos I've got sort of some things in my mind, but it might be sort of...what do you...

I: ...so in terms of,... there has been a lot of changes since the focus has shifted from a structural based approach....

R: ... the... syllabus types...

I: ... the way that has changed, is there some sort of way that you ensure that language teachers are aware of changes or current approaches or...?

R: Hopefully that will come up through a lot of the PD sessions, yeah.

I: Okay, are there any other comments that you would like to make?

R: No probably not, no.

Eve

I[nterviewer]: X, first of all can you tell me which courses do you offer here, so for example, core language development, skills specific, ESP or any other sort of ESP based courses?

R[espondent]: Yes. Ok, so we have General English first of all. We have 6 levels of General English and then we have 4 levels of advanced English and that's English for Academic Purposes. Um, we also have English for Specific Purposes and that's concurrent, those are concurrent programmes we run. So, we have modules from the English for Academic Purposes or we call it a Certificate of Advanced English. The higher level, we have the modules from there combined with mainstream study, but it changes slightly and becomes English for Specific Purposes. So, the vocabulary and the assessment and so on are designed to, tailored to meet the advanced English needs but we use the content and topics from the mainstream study and we have one of those for Health Studies. So, we have advanced English plus Health Studies and we have one for the NZ Diploma in Business, advanced English and NZBus and we also have the framework there to offer one for trades as well. Um, but there isn't a demand for that at the moment. As well as that we have, um we do language support where the students have language support for the modules in their mainstream qual. So, there's language support we offer for a Diploma in a Science degree, um sorry a module in the Science Diploma, and we also offer English language support for a module in the law, for the law paper of the New Zealand Diploma and Business and the law paper in the Bachelor of Business Studies, so they all have English support.

I: Can I ask you why the centre has chosen to offer these courses that you offer?

R: Um, we offer other courses too, but these ones, because it's to meet student need. Because IELTS 6, to go into mainstream IELTS 6, is um, it's not enough to stand independently and to just let them go. So it was in, in response to a demand and response, both from the students and from mainstream staff that students needed more support in mainstream. But also, going from where we offered just pure advanced English and then off they went and got and IELTS 6 or they were recommended into mainstream, we found also that really the best support is if

there's a transition phase where they do English plus their mainstream study, um, and then they're much better prepared to stand on their own in their degrees. But even so, I'd like to offer more support actually and I've seen a model for that at another institution¹⁰ where they have language support embedded right through the degree, **all the way through**, and it's a very successful model. So, that's where I'd like to aim. Yeah. We also have other low level programmes, we have literacy and we have work place literacy and, um, TOPS programme training opportunities, um, and programmes we call Easy English and Migrant Mothers that are designed for, um, people with a refugee background or migrants who have very low levels of English. So we have a wide range of programmes. And IELTS, we offer IELTS as well.

I: So, can I ask you who makes decisions about what to include in each of the courses?

R: Um, yes, the programme managers and the programme committee. We have programme committee meetings, so that's in conjunction with me and the programme managers and that's informed by what's coming from the teachers and the team meetings.

I: How are the decisions made? So you have these meetings and...

R: Programme committee meetings, those decisions are made.

I: And, is there in your opinion any difference between a proficiency-based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are language specific? So, for example, for language specific, the students will be able to use past perfect for events that are back in the past, as an example of language specific. And if you think so, what do you think are the differences?

R: Sorry, can you just be specific, so when you talk about proficiency, do you mean something like an IELTS type test, is that what you're meaning?

I: Well, an IELTS based course could be an example of a proficiency-based course. So is there in your opinion any difference between a proficiency based course and a course that focuses on outcomes that are language specific?

R: I think, um, there can be differences in the way people approach the delivery and the teaching, but any programme should be, the teaching should be tailored to the learning outcomes. It's the learning outcomes that determine the content. So we want, where they are at the pre-test, at the placement test and then where you

want them to be at the end, what learning outcomes you want them to achieve, has to drive the content and between. So there shouldn't, in essence, be a difference, I don't think, but I do think for example the IELTS course, there tends to be more of a focus on, it's more test-driven. So, test strategies and things like that, rather than, oh, it can be, rather than focus on language outcomes. But I think we're aware of that and we watch out for that.

I: Ok, and if you, you said that you offer skills-specific courses, if you offer skills-specific courses are different skills-specific courses taught to the same group of students, in the same year taught by the same person or different people?

R: We have in our General English and also Advanced English, we divide them into listening, speaking, reading and writing, um...

I: So in those courses, in the same year or same semester, are the same group of students taught by the same person or different people. So let's say they come here for 3 months or whatever the period is of the term, are they taught those skills by the same people or are they taught by different people. So does one maybe teach reading and writing, and the other one teachers the other skills, or are they the same?

R: Ah, I see what you're saying. Yes, no we have, we have people who specialise in their particular area, so a tutor will be a listening and speaking tutor, or a reading and writing tutor. But at the same time, if you're teaching long term, you need a bit of variety in your teaching life too, and it's good to have an understanding of all the skills and not just focus on reading and writing. So sometimes, sometimes we deliberately have, for example, an advanced level, a person who focuses on Level 3 and 4 Reading and Writing may say they'd really like to try Level 1 and 2 Listening and Speaking and so, but it always has to be a good fit as well. So as long as the person has the skills and the ability to do that, but they would work in a team to make sure they get up to speed with how you teach that and what the content is, so.

I: And so, do you believe that skills specific courses taught to the same group of students, do you think that those skills specific courses taught to the same students should be closely linked even though different teachers might be teaching it?

R: So, do you mean like we have three streams of the same level?

I: So if you have reading, let's say the same group of students they get reading and writing from one teacher, and maybe listening and speaking from the other teacher, do you think that the two skill groups should be closely linked.

R: Absolutely, definitely closely linked. So you're recycling the vocab and so on, so you're building. And also, you can't **completely** distinguish listening/speaking from reading/writing. There are always going to be crossovers, so you know, things like there will be incidental grammar teaching in listening/speaking and so on, you can't completely separate those, cos language crosses across all those things. So even though somebody might be focused on reading and writing there will be times when they'll, you know it's a bit of an artificial distinction we make but from the point of view of having to teach specific learning outcomes it works well that way, but there will always be a crossover and they have, absolutely have to work in-sync. So, for example, if they say they're doing, um writing an essay on acculturation, the listening/speaking tutor will also be using that same topic and doing listening/speaking activities based, using the same vocabulary and so one, same concepts, same ideas, yeah.

I: What sort of things do you believe should be taught in a writing course? And can you give me some examples?

R: Ok, now you realise I've been out of the classroom for two years, don't you? (laughs) So, I'm getting rusty...but in a writing course, genre and um the elements of discourse, and um, what else do they do, coherence and cohesion and vocabulary development and um APA referencing, um editing, all, a whole range of different things. I'm sure I've left bits out where the writing tutors would jump on me, I'm sure (laughs).

I: In relation to this previous question, what sort of things do you think, you're teachers generally teach in writing courses?

R: They teach those sorts of things, yeah, definitely and they work as a team. So, the planning is done as a team, they have a curriculum document, they have a syllabus developed and they, they meet weekly and make sure that they're covering what they need to cover to make sure the learning outcomes are achieved.

I: And do you think that language rules should be taught explicitly, implicitly or not at all?

R: Both, yes, both.

I: And in relation to the previous question, what do you think your teachers generally do?

R: I think they do both. Yes, there's explicit teaching and especially at the lower levels and, um, but there's also incidental teaching as it comes up, as you have to at the teachable moment, you know when it's the right time to teach something explicitly, but yeah there are many different, I think they have a good understanding that there have to be multiple approaches.

I: And in a core language development course, I'm imagining something like a certificate course, in the core language development, how much time do you think teachers should spend on teaching new language and practising using new language?

R: Um, teaching new and practising?....

I: So in the core language development course, how much time do you think teachers should spend on teaching new language and erm..as opposed to practising, using new language.

R: Oh, I haven't thought about it in terms of ratio like that before. Although, that's an interesting question. Um, there are always, I mean every class normally will start with a revision of what's gone before but it's determined a little bit too by the, well it's determined by two things: the content you have to get through, so that they achieve the learning outcomes, but also depending on the particular cohort, whether they, whether they have reached a level of competency in what has already been taught, how much revision and going over again you need to do or reinforcing. So, the beginning of a lesson will always be reinforcing and revising what has gone before and then there'll be, you know, different loops back as you go along, so you're introducing new but also revising the immediate past and the further back. But in terms of ratios, 50:50 or something like that, hmm I haven't thought about that, uh I've just how, how you balance, but I guess, it's probably something like, it's probably something like 20:80 I would think that maybe 20% is new and 80% is reinforcing and using what's already been taught.

I: And in relation to that previous question again, what do you think your teachers actually do? If you had to think about them.

R: Yes, that's a really good question and I suspect it is far too much emphasis on the new and not enough on the revision (laughs). Because I think there tends to be a tendency to teach to the test and probably people are galloping through a huge amount of content at the expense of making sure they solidify what has already been taught. That's just my gut feeling.

I: Does the content of the courses offered by your institution vary a lot from year to year?

R: No, it hasn't done. It will be tweaked slightly depending on the particular cohort, yeah. And what their strengths are and weaknesses and so on, their particular learning needs. But the curriculum documents have not been changed for some time and they are right in the process of being changed as we speak.

I: And do your teachers use text books?

R: Yes, uh, for yes, there's a base text for the General English classes, um and, but for the Advanced English, apart from Oshima and Hogue for Writing, they use a range of text books, they don't have one particular base text for the advanced classes.

I: How are these textbooks selected and by whom?

R: It's, that's a good question, we just recently bought some new text books and we have a group who, who put them together. So we have a core group who will go off to One English or wherever it is and have a look at texts that they think look interesting and they bring them back and put them out for discussion amongst the team or amongst the staff meeting and people make a case for why they think a book is worthwhile and it's discussed with the team and if the others also agree then that will be purchased. And sometimes if somebody loves something and someone else doesn't then they might buy their own copy.

I: Who sets assessments for students during courses and at the end of courses?

R: During the courses it's the team. They have formative assessments that are, and actually this year we're formalising those formative assessments so that instead of every teacher writing their own assessment, they are being written as a team. And, um they have to be moderated, pre-moderated and approved by the programme

manager and they'll be put in a, in a new filing system. It's an electronic filing system that will have a bank of formative tests, um and the summative assessments are determined at the writing of the curriculum document and then the development of the syllabus which is the next stage after that, and those are determined by the whole team working together, but they have to be signed off by the programme manager and the programme committee and then those may not be tweaked, you know you can't have different staff members tweaking the summative assessments, that is not ok.

I: How is the content of end of course tests or exams determined?

R: That, that's part of that process of writing the curriculum document and the development of the syllabus and that's based on the learning outcomes and also what's a reasonable way to assess language. So, they were just going through that process at the moment with the new curriculum documents, two of them. And so they are looking at a combination of portfolio, depending on the level of the students. Maybe portfolios or essays, reports that might need writing or it could be a listening test, oral presentation or a group presentation. So they're looking at what's most appropriate for assessing whether students have achieved those learning outcomes. So, a test that's fit for purpose in other words.

I: Also related to assessment, are there any courses offered by your institution that you would be happy to see assessed in relation to a proficiency test, such as IELTS, rather than an internal exam?

R: (long pause) No. Probably not. It might be useful from the point of view of interest, but um I don't know if it would be a, a valid, um exercise to put the students through. It might be of interest to us and from the point of view for your research it might be interesting but I don't know how we'd justify that with the students, I don't think that would meet their needs.

I: What qualifications do you expect your teachers to have, as a minimum?

R: A Post-Graduate Diploma in Second Language Teaching.

I: And have all teachers, have all of them done a course of some kind in teaching language or languages?

R: All, except one. Yes, and he has a Master of Arts in Literature and is working towards an applied linguistics qualification.

I: How many of the teachers do you think have done a course in teaching language or languages that included an assessed teaching practice?

R: That's a good question, we've just discussed that at the staff meeting this week and I think it was every single teacher except that one.

I: Are the courses that you offer described in terms of levels?

R: Yes. Are you talking in Common European Framework terminology or...

I: Generally...

R: ...in terms of intermediate, upper intermediate and so and, yes, yes.

I: And do you have statements that describe the different levels?

R: Yes we do, but we are just in the process, because we had the old curriculum document that wasn't adequate. We're just in the process of going through that so it's not completed, but we do, yeah.

I: So you can't give me an example, like one of those statements or what they say.

R: Ah well we got that link to the Common European Framework. So, for example Intermediate is what would internationally be called Intermediate, Upper Intermediate would internationally be called Upper Intermediate. And then for the advanced classes CA 1,2, 3 and 4 the entry point for, for CA 1 is IELTS 5. So, we benchmarked that, those 4 levels with IELTS but not the General English levels, only the academic English levels.

I: Does your institution have documents that outline the content of each of your courses.

R: Yes.

I: And if so, how detailed are these documents? Do they include specific language that has to be taught?

R: We're just, this is the syllabus we're developing. So, we've got the..., the project that's underway at the moment is re-writing the curriculum documents and that's on the point of finishing, within 10 days, 9 days now that process will be finished. 9 stressful days, yes, but that will be finished. And then from there the next step that's already been planned is the syllabus development. And the syllabus development will have the detail that builds from the curriculum document. So, the curriculum document, I mean an experienced teacher could take the curriculum document and teach from that but we need the syllabus that

has the nitty gritty of exactly what the content is at the point of grammar level, yeah.

I: So, they will include specific language that needs to be taught?

R: Yes.

I: And do you have an idea of how that will be described?

R: Um, I think, I think we need to have it in terms of, um, quite specific, so that someone could come and someone who hadn't taught here before could come in and pick up that syllabus and know exactly what any level needs to have covered. Um, and we're also planning a bank of resources that will be held electronically that will be at the level of lesson plans. So, that doesn't mean that an experienced teacher can't tweak that and deliver in their own way. But it has to be, from a point of quality control and guaranteeing the learning outcomes. It will be reasonably prescriptive and I think it needs to be. It doesn't mean that an experienced teacher can't still put their own, you know, teach their own way and it will always have to be tweaked according to a particular cohort at any one time. So, you know, just because it says, you know, this level will learn the present perfect or whatever it is. It doesn't mean that each level will need the same concentration of time or energy put into teaching present perfect. But it needs to be, the content must be what will achieve the learning outcomes by the end and there has to be some continuity with that. There can't be, each teacher just goes and shuts the door and does their own thing.

I: And who's going to be responsible for designing those documents?

R: That's the programme committee and that's the teaching team, is a particular team I've put together, I pulled from the staff a team for the General English curriculum document and a team for the Advanced English curriculum document. From the experienced staff who had knowledge across the different areas and together, in conjunction with our X Unit¹⁵, they have been writing the content for those documents. And now that has to be approved and signed off from our programme committee meeting and then it will go to the X Unit. It has to meet their guidelines and their,... you know, and we have to get through that. And that's quite a strict panel there who are pressure tested, seriously and ask us a lot of difficult questions and then it will go on to NZQA and ITPQ.

I: Within these documents, do these documents, the syllabus as well, make reference to the nature of the tests?

R: Yes, yes.

I: Do they include 'can-do' statements?

R: Yes. Yes.

I: Would you say that the main focus of the majority of courses taught in your institute is grammar, tasks, vocabulary, language-skills, learning-skills or some combination of these?

R: A combination of those, yes, definitely a combination.

I: You said that you implement some of the Common European Framework of Reference Recommendations? Can you tell me why?

R: Because we want to be, um, academically robust and we want to make sure that we, um, aligned with what's considered best practice internationally, we want to be able to benchmark what we do and our student's levels. So, that we're confident that they're ready for what we think they are ready for. Um, and also within NZ with reputable institutions in NZ and Australia, we want to be aligned with what is best practice.

I: What professional development opportunities, if any, are provided for your teaching staff?

R: X institute does professional development very well, and getting better all the time, I think. Every alternate Friday we have a professional development session within the centre, where the experienced staff run sessions as refreshers for other experienced staff and as new sessions for less experienced staff and they might be on classroom management techniques, or use of the phonemic chart, how to del..., how to do teach grammar in a meaningful, interactive way, or a whole range of things. Um, we have those every second Friday and then the Fridays in between we have academic hour, this is 3.15 to 5 every Friday (laughs) and no we don't have any trouble getting a classroom needless to say, and on those alternates we have academic hour which is really interesting. We have guest speakers come in from Z university or from within here, and we deliver too on topics to do with research, research based topics or reporting back on conferences and just elements of interest like that, so it's always really great. The last one we had was a session last Friday, was on IELTS. Before that I think we had, what was the topic before

the holidays, the one before that, um I can't remember we've had a whole range of people reporting back on the different elements of their research or a wide range, wide range of topics, so we have that. We also have a whole host of PD available from within Wintec, run by the Capability Development Unit and there are all kinds of things like how to use Excel, how to use the learning platform⁷, how to write lesson plans, a whole range of things. We also have the CLESOL conference coming up this year, we have attendance at conferences, um 9 of the staff are attending the CLESOL conference in Dunedin this year. We have also literacy, literay and numeracy training, and I have several staff enrolled in the X qualification , we also have some, we have one at the moment attending literacy and numeracy clusters at X University. We had several last year doing that. Um what else do we have, we have some staff involved in research. Even though, at our level we don't have to, cos we don't teach on degrees...We have a genuine interest and developing research culture in this centre and we have a research leader appointed who looks after that, um, what else? Those are the main things I think, but it's actually quite significant for us and I'm trying to build a very strong academic, capable staff and I think, I think all of us take pride in being good, strong educationalists and having an academic focus and knowing our stuff and learning from one another and learning from outside of here as well.

I: Can I ask how decisions are made about what to offer?

R: We have a capability development cycle, like a performance review, twice a year. One main one in October and then a catch up one earlier in the year, around March, April, May somewhere around there. Um, it's April actually. And in those staff are asked to, in October they are asked to identify the areas of need they think they have themselves, or it might be observations too, that's another thing we do, we do peer observation and we do, you know, programme manager observations. So, they are asked to identify where they feel the needs themselves are. And then as well as that there are opportunities that appear like the CLESOL conference and those opportunities, they are offered to staff or the central things that are run by X are put up and staff are informed of what's there in case there is something that sparks their interest. So does that answer your question? I can't remember what it was now sorry.

I: So how decisions are made about what to offer...

R: So people request things or I suggest things to them or if there's... If I see a need that someone hasn't recognised or the programme manager sees a need that some person hasn't recognised then we'll ask someone, you know, we'll suggest someone that this might be an area that might be useful for them and sometimes people shoulder tap, like if they want someone to do something, so they become a bit of a local champion of something, and then they'll go off and do, yeah. So we, so you know, that they can then disseminate that for the rest of the team.

I: Do you think that it is important for the teachers to be aware of how the field of English language teaching has developed over time?

R: Yes.

I: And how, do you try to, in any of these sessions, make teachers aware of important developments in language teaching, past and present?

R: Um, I haven't focussed on the how in the past and now and that actually could actually be another... for an academic hour, that's a really good topic, we could look at, you know, transition from grammar translation method that would be quite interesting actually, especially for new teachers that would be interesting. But part of that I think is covered by, not completely, I think there's room for more there, but I think part of it is covered by the fact that I expect staff, you know, and they all know we're just amping it up, that, you know, minimum qualification needs to be a Post Grad Diploma here. So, part of that training is that you look at past teaching methods and how people teach now. But we do also have conversations about teaching in general, because there are many people here who have a good, solid teaching background from primary education or secondary education over a period of time and they have lots to teach other people as well about organising the syllabus and organising, class room management, a whole host of things to do with good quality teaching and learning.

I: Are there any other comments you wish to make?

R: No, I think, you know, over the last couple of years we have really had a push towards becoming a really strong, robust language centre and I think the staff really are buying into that and taking pride in improving what they do and being customer focussed, but also being pure if you like about what we do, you know, as educationalists. But also realising that, you know, the customer, looking after our

student's needs is paramount, so, being professionals, being professionals is important to us.

**Appendix 5: Overview of the programme documentation provided
by the interviewees**

Institution 1 (represented by Ann and Carol):

EAP

Includes a general statement about the programme and course outlines for 4 modules, the first labelled 'pre-intermediate', the second, third and fourth labelled 'intermediate', 'upper intermediate' and 'advanced' respectively. Entry points are stated as being equivalent to IELTS 4.0, 4.5, 5.0 and 5.5 respectively. For each module, there is a very general statement of aims (the same for all modules), followed by separate statements relating to (a) writing, (b) reading, (c) listening, (d) vocabulary/language, and (e) speaking and research. For both *Modules 1 and 2*, the entry under the heading of *Vocabulary/ Language* is as follows:

Modules 1 & 2: academic vocabulary, prefixes and suffixes, review grammar tenses, focus on correct spelling, focus on grammatical accuracy, and variation in sentence patterns.

As indicated above, the entries under each of the headings are so general as to leave decisions about course content largely open. Furthermore, there is little difference overall between the entries for *Level 1* and *Level 2* and those for *Level 3* and *Level 4*. Thus:

Modules 3 and 4 are the same except for (a) the omission from Module 2 (with reference to genres) of 'including process, problem and solution, and cause and effect' (under *Writing*) and of 'paraphrasing and synthesizing' (under *Reading*), (b) the replacement of 'and produce an annotated bibliography' in Module 1 by 'and produce a research essay' in Module 2 (under *Speaking and Research*), and (c) the omission from Module 2 of 'understanding how to work collaboratively in a group' (under *Speaking and Research*).

Modules 1 and 2 are the same in terms of *Reading* and *Vocabulary/Language*, the only differences between the modules being (a) the replacement of 'paragraph' in Module 1 by 'essay' in Module 2 (under *Speaking and Research*), (b) the replacement of 'short talks and dialogues' in Module 1 by 'short talks and lectures' in Module 2 (under *Listening*), the replacement of 'from sentence to paragraph' and reference to 'short descriptive essays, topic, supporting and concluding sentences' in Module 1 by 'from paragraph to essay' and 'note taking techniques, various genres, including narrative, advantages/disadvantages, compare/contrast and summary writing' in Module 2 (under *Writing*).

GE

Made up of an 'overview' document indicating that courses are based on textbooks and that the focus is on "systematic language development through speaking, reading, listening comprehension and writing skills with a focus on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation". It is indicated that the programme is presented in stages - Starter, Elementary, Pre Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and Advanced – and that entry to each 'stage' is determined by a placement test or a proficiency test score. There are short statements describing each 'stage', supplemented, except in the

case of Starter, by ‘can-do’ statements for listening and speaking, reading, and writing. It is noted that there are option classes, including Business English, Writing, Conversation, General Skills, and IELTS and Cambridge proficiency test preparation. It is also noted that there are ‘proficiency tests’ every five weeks that include grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing, listening and speaking components and that ‘[s]tudents are required to be 80% proficient at their current level to pass to the next level’.

Institution 2 (represented by Beth):

The information provided on the Institution’s Internet site makes a distinction between its *English for Academic Study* programme (divided into *Academic English 1, 2 and 3*) and its *English language programme*, the latter being designated ‘intermediate’ and being presented as providing preparation for the former. The documentation provided by the interviewee, however, provides specifications for both *elementary* and *intermediate*, the former appearing to relate to the entry point for the *English language programme*, the latter to its exit point (and entry into the *English for Academic Study* programme). That documentation is said to be based largely on the 1995 version (Wylie & Ingram, 1995) of the *Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR): General Proficiency Version for English* (adapted and abridged) except in the case of the categories relating to speaking which are said to be taken from the *Occupational English Test for Health Professionals* (McNamara, 1988). The ASLPR has five basic levels (including level 0 = Zero proficiency) and a number of sub-levels (see *Appendix 6*) For the ‘elementary’ level (equivalent to level 1 of the ASLPR) the documentation includes an overall proficiency descriptor (very similar to the ASLPR level 1 descriptor) and descriptors for *speaking, listening, reading* and *writing* which include very general references to vocabulary, functions and grammar. Examples of each are:

Vocabulary – “Range of vocabulary limited to basic needs and interests”.

Functions – “Uses a variety of functions including giving and seeking factual information, suasion (getting things done), (more tentatively) asking about and expressing emotions”.

Grammar – “Basic structures (present and past simple and their negative and question forms and short answers, common prepositions and pronouns, basic word order) 75% accurate”; “Common basic coordinating conjunctions (eg and, but and because) are secure, but original sentences with subordinate clauses are produced only infrequently at this level”.

For the ‘intermediate level’, there is list of very general ‘core competencies’/achievement objectives (e.g. *Can demonstrate understanding of spoken information texts*) which include reference to the narrative and recount genres, as well as ‘performance outcomes’ (e.g. *Write a recount of a holiday*) and assessment criteria (e.g. *Basic grammar is fairly accurate and appropriate*) which are listed under the headings *oral*,

listening, reading, writing and learning. There are two further sets of descriptors which also appear to relate to the 'intermediate' level. One is described as being the 'exit proficiency level' and is compared to ASLPR *Basic Social Proficiency* (i.e. ASLPR Level 2); the other is described as 'exit introduction to Academic English' and is said to lie between ASLPR *Basic Social Proficiency* (level 2 on the ASLPR scale) and ASLPR *Basic Vocational Proficiency* (level 3 on the ASLPR scale).

For each of the remaining three levels (Academic English 1, 2 and 3), there are both descriptors and 'exit descriptors'. As in the case of 'exit Introduction to Academic English', 'exit Academic English 1' is said to be at a level that "lies between Basic Social Proficiency and Basic Vocational Proficiency" on the ASLPR scale. However, 'exit Academic English 2' and 'exit Academic English 3' are both said to be equivalent to Vocational Proficiency (level 4 on the ASLPR scale).

Institution 4 (represented by Eve):

Documentation for each of levels 1 to 5, labelled *beginner, elementary, intermediate, upper intermediate* and *advanced*. At each level, there are the same statements relating to *philosophy* ('learning is a cumulative process'; 'spiral progression'), *approach* ('eclectic', including 'communicative, task-based, genre based, and problem solving methodologies'), and *assessment* ('viewed as a diagnostic tool'; learning assessed against 'competency-based standards'). There is also a statement of *programme aims* and *learning outcomes*. Each level has an ICT skills component. Content statements are expressed under the headings *listening and speaking* and *reading and writing*. The following is an extract from Content sections (*listening and speaking* at level 1 followed by *reading and writing* at level 4):

Content: Listening and Speaking

Appropriate language structures based on the recommended themes for listening and speaking:

- Listening skills (e.g. listening to match items, check understanding, complete gap fills, repeat information, and to sequence)
- Simple general functions such as describing your family and asking and giving personal information;
- Simple interactional functions such as greetings, apologising, asking for things, making offers and talking on the phone;
- Pronunciation skills such as producing isolated vowel and consonant sounds and blends using the phonemic chart;
- Introduction to grammar – such as basic verb forms and tenses, mass and unit, comparison and some modal verbs – through controlled practice;
- Basic vocabulary from the first 500 general word list.

Content: Reading and Writing

Appropriate language structures and skills for reading and writing:

- Writing tasks and activities for cohesion and organisation including drafting and error correction
- Formal letters, biographies, narratives, opinion articles and film reviews
- Authentic and/or graded texts such as factual and informational texts, quizzes and formal letters to contextualize new language
- Appropriate, intensive texts for general and detailed comprehension questions
- Appropriate, intensive texts using gap fills, multiple choice, true/false questions
- Grammar structures such as verb forms and tenses, comparatives and superlatives, relative clauses, conditionals, reported speech, active and passive voice, past modals and articles
- Vocabulary from the first 2000 General Word List.

The ‘recommended topics’ at *level 1* include, for example, people (families, friends, celebrations, special events) and health (eating/drinking, exercise).

At each level, a specific, widely available textbook that is available internationally is recommended.

Learning outcomes, in the form of ‘can-do’ statements, are largely expressed in general terms. Two examples from *levels 1* and *4* and are outlined below:

Level 1: Understand simple spoken information and instructions.

Level 4: Infer meaning and draw conclusions from written texts using contextual clues: reading and writing

Appendix 6: Overview of ISLPR Scale
(see <http://www.islpr.org/ScaleLevels.html>)

Overview of ISLPR Scale

0	ZERO PROFICIENCY	Unable to communicate in the language.
0+	FORMULAIC PROFICIENCY	Able to perform in a very limited capacity within the most immediate, predictable areas of need, using essentially formulaic language.
1-	MINIMUM 'CREATIVE' PROFICIENCY	Able to satisfy immediate, predictable needs, using predominantly formulaic language.
1	BASIC TRANSACTIONAL PROFICIENCY	Able to satisfy everyday transactional needs.
1+	TRANSACTIONAL PROFICIENCY	Able to satisfy everyday transactional needs and limited social needs.
2	BASIC SOCIAL PROFICIENCY	Able to satisfy basic social needs, and routine needs pertinent to everyday commerce and to linguistically undemanding 'vocational' fields.
2+	SOCIAL PROFICIENCY	Level 2+ behaviour is significantly better than Level 2 but has not reached Level 3.
3	BASIC 'VOCATIONAL' PROFICIENCY	Able to perform effectively in most informal and formal situations pertinent to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation and in situations which are not linguistically demanding in own 'vocational' fields.
3+	BASIC 'VOCATIONAL' PROFICIENCY PLUS	Level 3+ behaviour is significantly better than Level 3 but has not reached Level 4.
4	'VOCATIONAL' PROFICIENCY	Able to perform very effectively in almost all situations pertinent to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation, and generally in almost all situations pertinent to own 'vocational' fields.
4+	ADVANCED 'VOCATIONAL' PROFICIENCY	Level 4+ behaviour is significantly better than level 4 but has not reached Level 5.
5	NATIVE-LIKE PROFICIENCY	Proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same sociocultural variety.