Bilingualism among Teachers of English as a Second Language

A study of second language learning experience as a contributor to the professional knowledge and beliefs of teachers of ESL to adults

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This work is dedicated to my parents, Margaret Stuart Ellis and the late Frederick Thomas Ellis.
Synopsis

This study is an investigation of the contribution of second language learning experience to the professional knowledge and beliefs of teachers of ESL to adults. The literature reveals that very little has been written about the language background of the ESL teacher who teaches English through English to adult immigrants. The thesis proposes an explanation for this based on the historical development of the profession, and argues that despite vast changes in second language acquisition theory and pedagogy in the last fifty years, an English-only classroom fronted by a teacher who is monolingual or who is encouraged to behave as if he or she is monolingual, has remained the dominant practice in Australia.

The research study is not a consideration of the merits of bilingual teaching versus monolingual teaching in English-only. Instead, it seeks to understand whether teachers who do have another language draw on it in ways relevant to the teaching of English, and to suggest reasons why teachers’ languages are disregarded in the profession. In doing so, the thesis draws on key bodies of literature in bilingualism, second language acquisition, teacher cognition and critical studies in an attempt to provide a framework for considering the research questions.

The study employed a qualitative, interpretive research design involving semi-structured interviews and the taking of detailed language biographies from a total of thirty-one practising teachers of ESL. Language biographies were analysed and categorised along several parameters, and the major distinctions made were between circumstantial bilinguals, elective bilinguals and monolinguals.

Three key themes emerged: teachers’ beliefs about learning a second language, the contribution made by teachers’ language learning experience to their reported beliefs and practices, and teachers’ beliefs about the role of the first language in second language learning. Bilingual teachers, both circumstantial and elective, appeared to have more realistic and optimistic beliefs about the nature of language learning than did monolingual teachers. Bilingual teachers appeared to see language learning as challenging but achievable. They recognised the dynamic nature of learning as incorporating progress, stagnation, attrition and re-learning. Monolingual teachers tended to see second language learning as almost impossible, and fraught with the
potential for loss of self-esteem. Both groups talked about their own language learning as a private undertaking unrelated in any public way to their professional lives.

The contribution made by language learning background fell into two groupings: of insights about language and language use, and about language learning and language teaching. Four key aspects of the former were insights about language in general deriving from knowledge of more than one; insights from contrasting LOTE and English; insights about the language-using experiences of bilinguals and biculturals, and insights about the possibilities of LOTE as a pedagogical tool in the ESL class. The second grouping included insights into learning strategies; insights about the affective aspects of being a language learner; knowledge of different teaching approaches from experience, and insights from different teaching contexts made possible by bilingualism. Overall the broader and richer the language background, the more sophisticated and developed were the insights which appeared to be relevant to teaching ESL.

The third data chapter analysed teachers’ expressed beliefs about the role of learners’ first language(s) (L1) in the ESL class. Here little difference was found between bilingual and monolingual teachers, but overall L1 was characterised as an undesirable element in the ESL class. Teachers’ discourse regarding L1 was analysed and found to be heavily characterised by negative and pejorative terms. This finding, combined with the teachers’ generally weakly-articulated rationales for the exclusion of L1, led to the conclusion that beliefs and practices regarding L1 are a consequence of the monolingual focus of the ESL profession.

The findings of the study in general are that ESL teachers draw on any language learning experience as a resource in teaching, and ‘experiential knowledge’ seems to be readily available to them in the ways they represent their own knowledge and beliefs in talk. It appears to be important in informing and shaping their conceptions of their practice as language teachers. There are differences between bilingual and monolingual teachers in that the former have much richer resources on which to draw. There are added insights which come from circumstantial or elective bilingual experience, from being a non-native English speaker, and from formal and informal learning experience. In general, the more and varied the language learning experience, the deeper and more sophisticated the resource it is to draw on in teaching. It is argued that the teaching of
ESL is constructed as “the teaching of English” rather than as “the teaching of a second language”, meaning that the ‘experiential knowledge’ (Wallace 1991) of bilingual teachers is unvalued. It appears to be accepted and unquestioned that a monolingual teacher can teach a learner to be bilingual.

These propositions are discussed in the light of the writings of critical theorists to give a wider perspective on the monolingual discourse of the ESL profession. Bourdieu’s notion of ‘habitus’ as strategic practice which is structured by a sociocultural environment (Bourdieu 1977a) is the basis for Gogolin’s (1994) idea of a ‘monolingual habitus’ in education. Their work, and that of Skutnabb-Kangas (2000a) who refers to ‘monolingual reductionism’, suggest a social, political and discursal explanation for the invisibility of teachers’ languages in the ESL profession. It is suggested that teacher language learning background should become a legitimate topic for discussion and further research.
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: **Introduction**  

Chapter 2: **Background – the ESL profession in Australia**  

2.1 The sociolinguistic and policy context of ESL in Australia  
2.2 Structure of the profession  
2.3 Brief history of the ESL profession in Australia  
2.4 Published ESL materials  
2.5 TESOL teacher qualifications and standards in Australia  
2.6 TESOL teacher competencies in Australia and other English-speaking countries  
2.6.1 Australia  
2.6.2 Canada  
2.6.3 USA  
2.6.4 UK  
2.6.5 New Zealand  
2.7 Summary of statements of teacher qualifications, standards and competencies  
2.8 Research questions  

Chapter 3: **Literature Review**  

3.1 Bilingualism and second language learning  
3.1.1 The field of bilingualism  
3.1.2 Definitions and dimensions of bilinguality  
3.1.3 Relative competence  
3.1.4 Routes to bilinguality  
3.1.5 The bilingual person  
3.1.6 Bilingual language use  
3.1.7 Native and non-native English speaker teachers  
3.1.8 The conflation of ‘native speaker’ with ‘monolingual’ and of ‘bilingual’ with ‘non-native speaker’  
3.1.9 Summary of bilingualism and second language learning
3.2 The value of language learning

3.2.1 Policy statements
3.2.2 Intellectual benefits of language learning
3.2.3 Language awareness
3.2.4 Cultural benefits of language learning
3.2.5 Other benefits of language learning: “language apprenticeship”
3.2.6 Other benefits of language learning: exhilaration
3.2.7 Other benefits of language learning: social equity
3.2.8 The undesirability of monolingualism
3.2.9 Summary of the value of language learning and the implications for ESL teachers

3.3 The role of the first language in second language learning

3.3.1 Definition of the term ‘first language’
3.3.2 The history of method in language teaching
3.3.3 Second language acquisition theory
3.3.4 Critical views of the role of L1 in English language learning
3.3.5 The role of L1 in the ESL class - 1980s and 1990s
   3.3.5.1 Reasons for lack of attention paid to L1
   3.3.5.2 Benefits of L1 use
   3.3.5.3 Negative effects of L1 use
   3.3.5.4 Translation
3.3.6 Contemporary perspectives on L1: international
3.3.7 Past and present practice regarding L1 in Australian ESL
3.3.8 Summary of the role of the first language in second language learning

3.4 Critical approaches to TESOL

3.4.1 Introduction to critical approaches to TESOL
3.4.2 The spread of English
3.4.3 The ELT profession
3.4.4 Pedagogies in ELT
3.4.5 Directions
### 3.5 Teacher cognition: teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about second language learning and ESL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1 Teacher cognition studies in general education</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2 Teacher cognition studies in second language teacher education</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3 Establishing the knowledge base of ESL teachers</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4 Knowledge derived from experience</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.5 Research on language learning experience in teacher education</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.6 The structured language learning experience (LLE) as a teacher development tool</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.7 Discussions of content knowledge and procedural knowledge</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.7.1 Content knowledge</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.7.2 Procedural knowledge</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.8 Which kinds of knowledge are Australian ESL teachers expected to have?</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.9 A framework for examining teachers’ knowledge and beliefs</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 4: Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Research questions</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Research traditions</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Characteristics, problems and benefits of selected research methods</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Method choices in similar studies</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Design of the study</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Respondents</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Data gathering</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Data analysis</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.1 Language biographies</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.2 Interview data</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Summary</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Findings: Teachers’ language biographies

5.1 Introduction 170
5.2 The teachers’ self-reported proficiency and status as bilinguals 172
  5.2.1 Circumstantial bilinguals 173
  5.2.2 Elective bilinguals 174
  5.2.3 Monolinguals 175
5.3 How the teachers learned languages 177
5.4 When teachers learned their languages 178
5.5 Reasons why the teachers learned languages 180
5.6 The teachers’ affect towards their languages 181
5.7 Frequency of use of languages other than English 184
5.8 The number of languages teachers have learned or had sustained contact with 185
5.9 Summary of teachers’ language biographies 187

Chapter 6: Findings: Teachers’ beliefs about second language learning 190

6.1 Beliefs about teachers’ own second language learning 191
  6.1.1 Bilinguals 191
    6.1.1.1 Bilinguals’ views of their own language proficiency 191
    6.1.1.2 Bilinguals’ views of discontinued attempts at learning languages or failures 193
    6.1.1.3 Bilinguals’ beliefs about progress and attrition 194
    6.1.1.4 Bilinguals’ beliefs about bilinguality 195
    6.1.1.5 Bilinguals’ belief that language learning is difficult, but possible 197
  6.1.2 Monolinguals 198
    6.1.2.1 Monolinguals’ views of their own language proficiency 198
    6.1.2.2 Monolinguals’ views that language learning is difficult and humiliating 203
6.2 Teachers’ beliefs about students’ learning of English as a second language 206
  6.2.1 The difficulty or ease of learning English compared to other languages 206
  6.2.2 Beliefs about which aspects of English are difficult or easy for students 208
    6.2.2.1 Difficult aspects of English for students 208
    6.2.2.2 Easy aspects of English for students 211
6.2.3 Beliefs that English or language learning is a difficult task for students

6.3 Summary of teachers’ beliefs about language learning

Chapter 7: Findings: How teachers’ language learning experience contributes to their knowledge and beliefs in ESL teaching

7.1 General beliefs about the value of language learning for teachers

7.1.1 Language learning as a major formative influence on ESL teaching

7.1.2 Beliefs about the value of language experience for ESL teachers

7.2 Insights about language and language use from teachers’ own experience

7.2.1 Insights about language in general

7.2.2 Insights from comparing LOTEs to English and to each other

7.2.3 Insights about the language experiences of bilinguals and biculturals

7.2.3.1 Code-switching

7.2.3.2 Linguistic aspects of migration

7.2.3.3 Subtractive bilingualism

7.2.4 Bilingual identity

7.2.4 Insights about the use of a LOTE as a pedagogical tool in ESL

7.3 Insights about language learning and language teaching from teachers’ own experience

7.3.1 Insights into learning and communication strategies from their own learning experience

7.3.2 Insights into the affective aspects of being a language learner from their own learning experience

7.3.2.1 Identifying oneself as a model of a learner to the students

7.3.2.2 Identifying with or empathising with students in one’s own mind

7.3.2.3 Experience of the frustration and/or difficulties that students undergo

7.3.2.4 Experience of the humiliation and threat to one’s ego posed by language learning

7.3.3 Insights into different teaching approaches from the perspective of a student

7.3.3.1 Experience of the medium of instruction not being L1

7.3.3.2 Experience of different teaching methods as a student

7.3.3.3 How insights from their own experience are applied
7.3.4 Knowledge of issues relating to teaching one’s own first language 266
7.3.5 Insights into the demands of varied language teaching contexts from their own experience as teachers 268
7.4 Summary of how teachers’ language learning experience contributes to their knowledge and beliefs in ESL teaching 270

Chapter 8: Findings: Teachers’ beliefs about the role of students’ first language in learning ESL 273

8.1 Introduction 273
8.2 Students’ use of the first language is favourably regarded 274
  8.2.1 Students’ use of the first language is favourably regarded without qualification 274
  8.2.2 Students’ use of the first language is favourably regarded under particular circumstances
    8.2.2.1 Circumstances: for students to help each other 275
    8.2.2.2 Circumstances: as a last resort 276
    8.2.2.3 Circumstances: to clarify meaning 278
    8.2.2.4 Circumstances: at low levels 278
    8.2.2.5 Circumstances: at break-time 278
8.3 Students’ use of the first language is tolerated 280
8.4 Students’ use of the first language is unfavourably regarded 282
  8.4.1 Students’ use of the first language is unfavourably regarded for pedagogical reasons
    8.4.1.1 To gain maximum exposure to English 283
    8.4.1.2 The effort to understand and communicate 286
    8.4.1.3 Thinking in English – avoiding translation 288
    8.4.1.4 English-only makes for faster learning and better-quality learning 289
    8.4.1.5 Class management 290
  8.4.2 Students’ use of the first language is unfavourably regarded for other reasons 291
  8.4.3 Students’ use of the first language is unfavourably regarded for unstated reasons 293
8.5 Teacher actions or reactions to students’ use of the first language 294
8.6 Discourse about first language
  8.6.1 Negative terms for the act of speaking another language in the ESL class 297
  8.6.2 Negative ways of referring to L1 299
  8.6.3 Positive ways of referring to L1 300
8.7 Summary of teachers’ beliefs about the role of students’ first language in learning ESL 302

Chapter 9: Conclusion 307

Appendices 319

Appendix A NEAS guidelines on teacher qualifications 320
Appendix B Interview questions 323
Appendix C Summary of teachers’ language biographies 325
Appendix D List of languages occurring in teachers’ language biographies 328

References 329

List of tables

Table 1: Content and procedural knowledge of NS, NNS, bilingual and monolingual teachers 148
Table 2: Self-reported major formative influences on ESL teaching 220
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Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:
## Abbreviations and acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
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<td>ACTA</td>
<td>Australian Council of TESOL Associations</td>
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<td>AEC</td>
<td>Australian Education Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALAA</td>
<td>Applied Linguistics Association of Australia</td>
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<td>ALLP</td>
<td>Australian Language and Literacy Policy</td>
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<td>ALS</td>
<td>Australian Linguistics Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Program – (national)</td>
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<td>AMES NSW</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Service – (New South Wales)</td>
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<td>Australian National University</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARELS</td>
<td>Association of Recognised English Language Schools (UK)</td>
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<td>ATESOL</td>
<td>Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NSW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BANA</td>
<td>British and North American</td>
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<td>BASELT</td>
<td>British Association of State English Language Teachers</td>
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<td>BATQI</td>
<td>British Association of Teacher Qualifying Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIO</td>
<td>Bilingual Information Officer</td>
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<td>BL</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
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<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Curriculum Development Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>CELTA</td>
<td>Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults</td>
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<td>DEET</td>
<td>Department of Employment, Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DELTA</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Science and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Displaced Person (refugee)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td>EB</td>
<td>Elective bilingual</td>
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<td>EFL</td>
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<td>ELICOS</td>
<td>English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students</td>
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<td>ISLPR</td>
<td>International Second Language Proficiency Rating</td>
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<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
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<td>L1</td>
<td>First language</td>
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<td>Second language</td>
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<td>LAD</td>
<td>Language Acquisition Device</td>
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<td>LLE</td>
<td>Language learning experience</td>
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<td>LOTE</td>
<td>Language(s) other than English</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>MACTEQT</td>
<td>Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and the Quality of Teaching</td>
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<td>ML</td>
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<td>MT</td>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
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<td>NALSAS</td>
<td>National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCELTR</td>
<td>National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (Macquarie University)</td>
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<td>NEAS</td>
<td>National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme</td>
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<td>NESB</td>
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<td>Non-native speaker</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
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<td>TESEP</td>
<td>Tertiary, Secondary, Primary</td>
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<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<td>UCLES</td>
<td>University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is a study of the contribution made by second language learning experience to the professional knowledge and beliefs of teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). The study was motivated by the author’s noting, over many years of teaching ESL to adults and of educating ESL teachers, that there is no requirement that such teachers have any proficiency in a second language, or any experience in second language learning. An investigation of the role of second language experience of ESL teachers appeared to be warranted in view of the fact that the author had observed greater levels of metalinguistic awareness among beginning teachers of ESL who did have second language experience than among those who did not.

English has been taught to adult immigrants in Australia via the medium of English since the years following World War II. The accepted explanation for this choice of English as a teaching medium is the practical impossibility of providing bilingual instruction in English and the learner’s own language. Immigrants and refugees come from a wide range of language backgrounds (Hardgrave 2002) and the sheer number of languages spoken by learners makes universal bilingual provision impractical. The logistical and financial difficulties of providing bilingual classes are exacerbated by the fact that the languages involved change with the influx of refugees from worldwide conflicts every few years. Teaching English via the medium of English (monolingually), then, is seen as the only possible way of dealing with mixed-language groups. This phenomenon is examined further in Chapter 2, along with the theoretical rationale for monolingual English teaching.

As a result of this practice of teaching English through the medium of English, teachers of ESL are neither required to nor trained to have proficiency in a language other than English (LOTE). Their training focusses mainly on analysis of the English language, second language acquisition theory and teaching methodology. Teacher education is considered in more detail in Chapter 2. There is no requirement, for entry to or advancement in the profession, for any knowledge of another language, either gained by growing up bilingually or through formal instruction. It is unremarkable for ESL
teachers to be monolingual, and there appears to be no questioning or discussion of this either in professional circles or in the literature. This is not to say that all or even many teachers are monolingual. Some are native speakers of a language other than English and others have high levels of proficiency in LOTE. Given that there are bilingual teachers in the profession, it is surprising that their presence and skills are very little discussed. There is no publicly available data to tell us about the language background and skills of the members of the ESL teaching profession, so there is currently no way of knowing who is monolingual and who is bilingual or multilingual. Secondly, since teachers’ language background is not recognised as a subject worthy of investigation and discussion, there is no research on what significance it might have for their teaching. We do not know whether a teacher who speaks two or more languages has more to offer, when teaching English through the medium of English to mixed-language groups, than does a monolingual teacher. There are detailed documents outlining the competencies required by ESL teachers, as discussed in Chapter 2, but these documents do not stipulate whether such competencies can best be achieved on the basis of one language or more. There is a resounding silence on the question of whether language learning experience is of benefit to ESL teachers, and a gap in our understanding of the contribution such experience may make to their professional knowledge. This study makes an attempt to throw some light on this question.

The research study is not a consideration of the merits of bilingual teaching in English and a learner’s first language versus monolingual teaching in English. Nor is it an attempt to discover whether or how language learning experience affects a teacher’s classroom practice. Instead, it seeks to understand how ESL teachers’ second language proficiency and second language learning experience contributes to their professional understandings. The thesis proposes that the prevailing monolingual approach to ESL teaching is worthy of interrogation as to its basis in theory, its causes and its effects. Since there is no literature which directly addresses these questions, the thesis draws on several bodies of linguistic and educational literature in an attempt to examine the research questions from different angles. The remainder of this introductory chapter will outline the structure and content of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides the background for the study by discussing the sociolinguistic and policy context of ESL in Australia. It describes the structure of the profession and gives a brief history of its development over the last fifty years. Statements of teacher
qualifications, standards and competencies in Australia and selected other countries are reviewed to demonstrate the proposition that there is little focus on teacher second language proficiency or learning in the ESL profession. Finally the research questions are stated before moving on to consider relevant literature.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature pertinent to the present study. As stated above, there is no tradition of research into the second language proficiency and learning experience of ESL teachers, but five relevant theoretical areas were identified and reviewed. Chapter 3.1 considers those areas of the field of bilingualism studies which attempt to define and describe bilingualism, as a precursor to the categorisation of teachers in this study as either bilingual or monolingual. Issues of bilingual competence, routes to bilingualism, bilingual language use and personal, affective aspects of bilingualism are reviewed. Two topics which lie at the intersection of bilingual theory and ESL and professional practice are discussed. These are: the relative status of native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers, and the conflation in the profession of the terms ‘bilingual’ and ‘non-native speaker’ and of ‘monolingual’ and ‘native-speaker’.

Chapter 3.2 looks at the literature in the field of LOTE (languages other than English) teaching. The rationale for this is that in considering whether second languages may be beneficial for ESL teachers, it is useful to consider claims which have been made about the value of second language learning for the general population. Arguments for the value of language learning cluster around intellectual or cognitive benefits, the development of language awareness and the development of cultural understandings. These arguments are reviewed with a focus on how they might apply to ESL teachers.

Chapter 3.3 reviews the literature on the role played by the learner’s first language (L1) in the learning of a second language (L2). All ESL learners have a first language, and statements about the need for ESL teachers to recognise and respect it are common. Firstly, there is an increasing focus in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) on the role of L1 in learning, and this is gradually leading to a reconsideration of the hitherto-accepted practice of barring the L1 from the classroom. Secondly, the data revealed a tension between teachers’ espoused beliefs about the learners’ L1 and their self-reported practices regarding the banning or permitting of L1 use. The emergence of this as one of the key themes in the data meant that it became important to review the theoretical justification for the inclusion or exclusion of L1.
Chapter 3.4 considers current critical approaches to TESOL. The term ‘critical’ is used here in the sense established by Fairclough (1989) and Pennycook (1994; forthcoming) meaning to uncover issues of power and ideology in language, thereby enabling us to view accepted doctrines and practice as historical, situated, interested and contestable. The reason for considering these perspectives is that one of the arguments of the thesis will be that the silence in the ESL profession regarding teacher language learning is a result of a ‘monolingual habitus’ (Gogolin 1994) which has arisen partly from historical factors around the development of the profession and partly from the monolingual perspective of language and educational administrators and policy-makers.

Chapter 3.5 reviews the literature in the sub-field of teacher education known as ‘teacher cognition’. This literature begins from the premise that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices based on complex cognitive networks composed of knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and experiences (Borg 2003). Much of this literature attempts to establish links between teachers’ cognitions and their classroom actions, which this study does not. However this literature forms an important backdrop for the present study. It is used here to show how a focus on teachers’ mental lives is crucial to the understanding of teaching, and how life experience has been shown to be an important contributor to the formation of teachers’ professional knowledge. There has been little focus on language experience as a contributor to professional knowledge, and this is the gap which this study sets out to fill.

Chapter 4 describes the research methods used in the study, which were qualitative and interpretive, utilising semi-structured interviews and language biographies of practising ESL teachers as the main sources of data. A theoretical rationale for this choice of methods is given, along with a discussion of their strengths and weaknesses. Details are given of the design of the study, the recruitment of respondents, the gathering of data and the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 5 is the first of four chapters which describe the Findings of the study. It describes the language biographies of the teachers studied, and, drawing on the bilingualism literature discussed in Chapter 3.1, categorises their language learning experience along a number of parameters.
Chapter 6 describes the teachers’ beliefs about the nature of second language learning which emerged from the data. They include beliefs about language learning in general, beliefs about their own language learning, and beliefs about their students’ language learning. Links are made between the teachers’ own language learning biographies as discussed in Chapter 5, and their beliefs.

Chapter 7 reports the data which showed how teachers themselves viewed the contribution made by their own language learning experience to their professional knowledge and beliefs. These included beliefs about the formative influence of their own language learning on their practice as teachers, knowledge they gained about language and languages as a result of their own second language proficiency, and the knowledge they had gained about language learning and language teaching from their own language learning experience. Most of the data here comes from the bilingual teachers, since they have the most language learning experience, but, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, even monolingual teachers had some language learning experience, and this figures here also.

Chapter 8 reports teachers’ beliefs and reported practices regarding the role of the students’ L1 in the ESL classroom. These beliefs fall into three main groupings: a positive regard for the L1; a tolerance for its use in the ESL class and a negative regard for L1. The most common of these were negative attitudes and practices of banning the L1. In discussing these findings, the discrepancy is pointed out between prevailing theory about the role of the L1 and the teachers’ beliefs and reported practice. A link is made between this problematic status of the L1 in the learning process and the prevailing monolingual ethos of the profession.

Chapter 9 discusses the findings from Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 and places them in the context of the literature reviewed in the five sections of Chapter 3. The main arguments are summarised and the contribution this study has made to our understanding of the research questions is outlined. The claim made in Chapter 2 that teacher language learning has been ignored is revisited, and the implications for teachers, students and the profession are discussed. Finally there is a consideration of what this research has achieved, what it could not achieve, and suggestions for a continuation of research in this area.
Chapter 2

Background - The ESL profession in Australia

Chapter 2 provides the background for the study by placing the ESL profession in its social, historical and educational context. There is a brief outline of Australia’s status as a multicultural and multilingual nation, followed by a description of the structure of the ESL profession and an outline of its historical development. There follows an examination of TESOL teacher employment standards, required qualifications and statements of competency in Australia and selected other English-speaking countries. This information is used to support the contention that the field of ESL has developed and continues to be practised as a monolingual enterprise in which the second language(s) of teachers are disregarded.

2.1 The sociolinguistic and policy context of ESL in Australia

Australia is often described as a multicultural and multilingual society, since its population contains a high proportion of immigrants from a wide range of countries. All of its inhabitants who are not indigenous people (who comprise approximately 2% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002)) are either immigrants themselves or are descended from immigrants. While there is a popular misconception that Australian society was until the 1950s almost exclusively descended from English-speaking antecedents, in fact there has since the late eighteenth century been immigration by people from a range of language backgrounds. (See Castles et al, 1992 for a full discussion of immigration and multicultural policy.) The 2001 national census reveals that 20.9% of the population speaks a language other than English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002). Bilingualism and multilingualism, however, are phenomena largely confined to immigrant and Aboriginal populations, and are much less common among Australian-born native-English speakers (Lo Bianco 1997). There is a tendency for immigrants’ languages to fall into attrition and disuse by the second generation (Clyne 1991a), and all the surviving Aboriginal languages are under threat (Walsh 1993). Multilingualism, then, while it clearly exists, is distributed unevenly and is certainly not a feature of mainstream English-speaking Australia.
The 1980s was a decade characterised by the policy of ‘multiculturalism’ which saw a number of social initiatives aimed at encouraging immigrants to retain their cultural and linguistic heritage, as a counter to previous policies of assimilation and integration (Castles et al 1992). Policies which encouraged immigrants to retain their languages, and encouraged English-speakers to learn other languages, have, however, been on the decline since then as discussion of two major policy documents shows. The two major national language policy documents relevant to language education and therefore the ESL profession in the last fifteen years are the National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco 1987) and Australia’s Language – the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) (DEET 1991). A comparison of these policy documents shows differences in their explicit content and of their underlying view of Australian society which have important implications for how languages are regarded in education (Moore 1996). The NPL was committed to pluralism in language policy, treated languages and cultures as inextricably linked, articulated multiple values for languages, and valued all Australians as speakers of languages. It recommended large increases in funding for ESL and recommended that all Australians should have the opportunity to learn a second language. The ALLP, however, in 1991 took the focus away from languages in the plural to concentrate on English for all, and proposed that the main challenge for education is to ensure literacy (in English) for all. Other languages are referred to as ‘foreign’, thereby ignoring the fact that many of them are spoken as part of daily life by Australian citizens: the so-called ‘community languages’ (Moore 1996). The latter term has been in use since about 1975 and serves to legitimate their existence as part of Australian life (Clyne 1991a). It has been argued that the increased focus on English literacy created by the 1991 ALLP has resulted in a downplaying of the status of ESL instruction and of community languages (Lo Bianco 2000). In 1997 central funding to the major provider of ESL to immigrants, the Adult Migrant Education Program, ceased and a system was introduced whereby providers had to tender competitively for funding to run programs. The effect of this change on the recognition of bilingual teachers is discussed below.

Native-English speaking Australians have a generally poor record of learning foreign or community languages and educational policy has demonstrated a lack of consistent support for the teaching of languages in schools (Djité 1994). A recent initiative by the Commonwealth government has been to cut the funding for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) program (Lo Bianco 2002).
This background is presented to show the context within which ESL provision exists in Australia. Languages other than English struggle for recognition in educational and social policy, and in the twenty-first century the emphasis is firmly on the acquisition of English (and English itself is framed in terms of literacy, rather than language) even if this means the marginalisation or exclusion of other languages. It is considered quite normal to be monolingual in English in Australia, and as in other English-speaking countries, to speak another language is even considered by some as slightly suspect (Peel 2001). Teachers of ESL have tended to be drawn from this monolingual, native English-speaking population rather than from multilingual immigrant populations, and, as discussed below, any second language skill such teachers may have is unknown and unutilised.

2.2 Structure of the profession

ESL provision for adult immigrant residents of Australia was until 1997 largely the responsibility of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), whose history and development is reviewed in the next section. The AMEP is charged with providing federally-funded instruction in English to help clients achieve a ‘functional’ level of English, that is, sufficient to settle satisfactorily in Australia. In NSW and the ACT (where the fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken) TAFE (Technical and Further Education) colleges have also provided ESL, generally linked to vocational or academic preparation courses. The term ESL is used here to refer to the learning of English in a second language context, as in the case of people who arrive as immigrants in Australia. It is distinguished from EFL, which is the learning of English in a foreign-language context, ie outside an English-speaking country. There are major overlaps in the theoretical approaches and methods used in both, but major differences in contexts of learning, student characteristics and student motivation in each. There are two other sectors which are concerned with English language teaching in Australia which blur the ESL/EFL distinction. The ELICOS sector (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) consists of public and private institutions which teach English to fee-paying non-resident overseas students and tourists. This kind of teaching is sometimes referred to as EFL, but students often make their home in Australia for several years and are sometimes therefore said to be living in a second language context. Universities also have learning assistance units which employ teachers with ESL training to teach English for Academic Purposes (EAP). ESL is also of course
taught at primary and secondary schools, but the focus of this thesis is on adult ESL and so schoolteachers are not discussed. There is some movement of teachers between the sectors described here, and much overlap in teacher education, with the exception of parts of the ELICOS sector. The umbrella terms TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and ELT (English Language Teaching) are often used to denote all these different contexts, and both will be used in this way in the thesis when it is necessary to distinguish the overall field from that of ESL taught to adult immigrants.

In 1997 a major funding restructure was undertaken by the federal government, and the AMEP’s programs were offered by tender to public and private organisations. As a result, publically-funded ESL is now taught by the AMEP, by TAFE colleges, by community colleges, adult education colleges and by private institutions.

2.3 Brief history of the ESL profession in Australia

The main question in language learning and teaching until after the second world war in Australia was on the best way to teach modern languages in the education system. Here international trends were largely followed in that Grammar-Translation was the principal method used for teaching French and German, the main languages taught in schools. Teacher training in modern languages and classical languages consisted mainly of learning the language itself, rather than examining and comparing ways of teaching it. Widdowson (1997) makes the point that the idea that teachers need to learn how to teach is a relatively recent one. Knowledge of the formal properties of a language was, in the first half of the twentieth century, considered to be sufficient to teach it. In such a transmission view, input is equated with intake (Widdowson 1997:121).

In the late 1940s, however, Australia was faced with the influx of tens of thousands of Displaced Persons (DPs) from post-war Europe (Martin 1998). The arrival of immigrants speaking a variety of languages posed a huge challenge to settlement services which had to devise ways to teach them English without recourse to a pool of bilingual teachers. The prevailing languages of early arrivals included Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and German, whereas Australian language teachers of the time were mainly trained in French, German, Latin and Ancient Greek. Recruitment advertisements in 1948 sought teachers who were speakers of Russian, German or other
Baltic or Slavonic languages (Martin 1998), but in recent decades there has been no requirement for another language for would-be ESL teachers.

After some minor experimentation with bilingual methods, mainly in German since that was the only shared language, the architects of what later became the AMEP devised a method known as Situational English which involved teaching English through English, with no recourse to the learners’ first language. The pioneers of this approach, Ralph Crossley, George Pittman and Charles Rule, were foreign language teachers themselves (Ozolins 1993, Gray 2000) and were aware of the developments in ‘direct method’ teaching of languages stemming from the late nineteenth century. The direct method was aimed at counteracting the tendency of traditional grammar-based teaching methods to produce students who could conjugate verbs but who had no oral or aural ability. By avoiding use of the first language, proscribing translation and concentrating on speaking and listening, learners were supposed to develop much better proficiency in the second language (Stern 1983, Howatt 1984). This approach was supported by behaviourist psycholinguistic theories prevalent in education in the 1940s. Behaviourist views of language learning saw the learning of a second language (L2) as a process of developing a set of new habits, and the first language (L1) as constituting old habits which would interfere with acquisition (Ellis 1994). L1 was thus best avoided in the learning process. Chapter 8 considers past and present theory about the role of L1 in the process of learning a second language.

We can see, then, that the direction of ESL teaching in post-war Australia was laid down in its early days as monolingual, in that English was taught via the medium of English by native-English speaker teachers. ESL teachers therefore had no need of another language. In summary, this direction came about through the timely confluence of three key factors:

- behaviourist educational theory which lent research weight to the exclusion of L1 in the classroom;
- the belief that direct method teaching would enable learners to use the language taught. This was, after all, a major goal of the migrant English program, since the intention was not to produce language scholars but to prepare immigrants to enter the workforce; and
• the urgent practical problem posed by the arrival of large numbers of migrants speaking languages which few Australian teachers knew.

It was thus a happy coincidence for the planners of the day that the only practical way the language teaching profession could cope with the migrant challenge – ie through English-only – chimed with then-current second-language learning theory as well as with prevailing (direct method) approaches then being used or attempted in some LOTE (then known as ‘foreign language’) classes by progressive teachers.

This brief history serves to demonstrate the background to the proposition explored in this paper, that Australian ESL teachers may well be monolingual, or if they are bilingual, their other language(s) are not regarded as necessary or worthwhile in their teaching. Despite vast changes in second language acquisition theory and pedagogy in the last fifty years (Feez 2001, Burns 1996a), the reality of English-only classrooms fronted by a teacher who is monolingual, or who is encouraged to behave as if he or she is monolingual, has remained the dominant practice. While the focus of the thesis is Australia, and specifically NSW and the ACT, a similar situation exists in other English-speaking countries with high immigrant intakes and ESL programs (Auerbach 1993).

2.4 Published ESL materials

A consideration of the published materials about and for ESOL teachers and students confirms the monolingual nature of the teaching process. A broad selection of texts commonly used in Australian ESL centres was reviewed. The selection included texts published in Australia as well as those published in Britain and the USA for an international market. Three texts which give state-of-the-art overviews of TESOL have no mention of the teacher speaking other languages, and no entry in their index for ‘first language’, ‘L1’ or ‘mother tongue’ (Tarone and Yule 1989, Richards and Nunan 1990, Richards and Renandya 2002), while another text whose focus is learner-centredness devotes only one paragraph of an entire book to teaching activities which draw on the learner’s L1 (Tudor 1996). A review of some of the most common TESOL teacher training manuals (Burns et al 1996, Nunan 1995a, Scrivener 1994, Harmer 1991, Wallace 1991, Hubbard et al 1983, Nunan 1999) shows that there is no mention of
teachers having a language other than English, and very little mention of the learners’ other language(s).

If we look at coursebooks designed for use by the student of ESOL, we find there is also no mention of the fact that learners have a first (and possibly other) language(s) (Walton and Bartram 2000, Viney and Viney 1992, Oxenden and Latham-Koenig 2001, Broadhead 2000, Nunan 1995b). Two of the classroom texts very widely used in ESL in Australia are ‘Words Will Travel’ (Clemens and Crawford, 1995) and ‘Over To You’ (NCELTR 1992), the latter being designed for distance learning. The first opens with notes for the teacher which include eight fundamental principles about language and language learning, and the second with advice for the learner on successful language learning. Neither contains any mention of the learner’s first language(s). Delaruelle (1998), another widely-used text, has no mention of L1, and while King and Paltridge (1991) do suggest that the student make cross-cultural comparisons, there is no suggestion of making cross-linguistic comparisons between English and the L1. There are exceptions to this silence on teachers’ and learners’ languages other than English (Atkinson 1993, Medgyes 1994, Deller and Rinvolucri 2002), but they are notable for the fact that they are exceptions. The vast majority of ESOL texts both for teachers and for students make no mention of the existence of any language other than English, and thereby support the contention of this thesis that teachers’ other languages are not valued in the profession.

The overwhelming impression from the texts reviewed above is of the absence of languages other than English in the ESL classroom, both those of the learner and those of the teacher. There have always been non-native English speaking teachers in the profession (who are bilingual by definition), but evidence suggests, as discussed in Chapter 3.1, that they have often been regarded as second-best to native-speaker teachers. Non-native English bilingual teachers tend to suffer a professional inferiority complex in the prevailing climate of direct method, communicative language teaching which emphasises the importance of input in fluent, idiomatic, native-like English (Ellis 2002). (See Braine (1999) and Medgyes (1994) for a discussion of issues pertaining to non-native-speaker teachers of English.) There were several initiatives in the 1980s in NSW in the bilingual teaching of students by a bilingual teacher sharing a common language (as discussed in Chapter 3.3), but the change to a competitive tendering system in 1997 had a major effect on these initiatives. Much teaching and management experience over the whole AMEP was lost (Schulze 1999). Bilingual programs were
abandoned for lack of funding, an attempt to create a register of bilingual teachers stalled and many bilingual teachers lost permanent employment and found work outside the adult ESL sector (O’Grady 2002, Joyce 2002). The one centre which still has a commitment to bilingual approaches has now turned its resources towards the production of bilingual materials in 15 languages for students to access for private study. While this one centre (and others which previously existed within its orbit) had a clear commitment to valuing bilingual teachers and bilingual teaching (Masters 1993), its ability to put that commitment into practice has been reduced through federal policy and funding decisions.

2.5 TESOL\(^1\) teacher qualifications and standards in Australia

In the following section I consider minimum employment standards and teacher education for TESOL teachers in Australia, and compare statements of competency for TESOL teachers in Australia and other English-speaking countries. The purpose of considering such standards and statements is to establish whether second language experience appears as an essential or desirable attribute either for admission to a teacher education course or for employment within the profession.

The National ELT Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) is the national accreditation body for English Language Teaching Centres. It was set up to regulate provision in the private (ELICOS) sector, but following deregulation of ESL funding, it was charged in 1998 with accreditation of publically-funded centres too. The requirements to become a teacher of ESL in Australia in accredited institutions as stated by NEAS are (for the full document see Appendix A):

- A recognised pre-service teaching qualification
- plus or including an appropriate TESOL qualification
  OR
- A recognised degree or diploma
- plus at least 800 hours’ classroom teaching experience
- plus an appropriate TESOL qualification

\(^1\) The term ‘TESOL’ is used in this thesis to refer to both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Some of the documents in this section cover teachers of both, hence ‘TESOL’ is the appropriate umbrella term.
A footnote to the above (see Note 2, Appendix A) states that to be ‘appropriate’, a TESOL qualification must have:

i. content focus on English language, language learning, TESOL teaching;
ii. a practical component including at least six hours’ supervised and assessed practice teaching in TESOL;
iii. no less than 100 contact hours in total devoted to (i) and (ii) above, or its equivalent in Distance Education Programs.

Courses in this category may be award courses at Master, Bachelor, Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate level.

There is no mention of knowledge of another language, but this is not surprising since there is also no mention of any necessary standard of English. NEAS leaves statements of this kind to the institutions which provide TESOL teacher education.

TESOL teacher education courses were examined by inspecting universities’ 2003 prospectuses, and by reading published surveys of the area, with a view to finding out whether a second language is specified for teachers-in-training either in entry requirements or in course content.

By far the most common route into adult TESOL is a degree or teaching diploma followed by a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or M.A. in TESOL or Applied Linguistics. The first survey of the then burgeoning number of TESOL/Applied Linguistics preparation courses was undertaken by Paltridge in 1988, and the field expanded so quickly that a second edition was published in 1992 (Paltridge 1992). In the 1988 edition eight organisations were listed in NSW offering twelve postgraduate TESOL courses and one in the ACT offering four postgraduate courses. Ellis (1995) undertook a survey of postgraduate TESOL courses in Australia which listed 19 courses at eight institutions in NSW and five courses at two institutions in the ACT, and in none of these was second language learning experience mentioned either as a requirement or as a compulsory component of the course.

A later survey conducted in 2003 (as part of the preparation of this thesis) of NSW and ACT tertiary institutions offering postgraduate qualifications in TESOL or Applied Linguistics revealed thirty-seven such courses offered by ten NSW institutions and six courses offered by two ACT institutions. The main entry requirement for all these
courses was an undergraduate degree or recognised teaching diploma. Several courses specified that adult or TESOL teaching experience was desirable, and several also specified English proficiency standards for entry, for example IELTS 6, TOEFL 550.

In none of the courses examined in the 1988 (Australia-wide), 1995 (Australia-wide) and 2003 (NSW and ACT) surveys were there any pre-requisites of proficiency of a second language, nor of experience of learning a second language. In none of the outlines of all these courses was there mention of second language learning as part of the coursework (although, as discussed in Chapter 3.5 at least one university has in the past offered a half-semester elective in ‘language learning experience’).

From this review of TESOL and Applied Linguistics courses 1988 – 2003 it is apparent that neither language learning experience nor L2 proficiency are necessary for entry to professional preparation courses or for graduation from such courses. While undoubtedly many qualified ESL teachers do have second languages, there is no requirement, by the tertiary institutions responsible for their training, for them to be other than monolingual.

2.6 TESOL teacher competencies in Australia and other English-speaking countries

2.6.1 Australia
Since the late 1980s there has been a trend in Australia towards the development of national competency standards for the trades and professions (Field 1990). The aims of such standards for teachers are, among other things, to establish, both within the teaching profession and in the eyes of the public, what competent teaching professionals need to know and to be able to do (McRae 1992). They are therefore worth examining in order to see what the profession holds to be important elements of teacher knowledge and skill.

The current document which states what Australian TESOL teachers should know and be able to do is the TESOL Teacher Competencies Document (Hogan 1994), commissioned by ACTA/ATESOL (Australian Council of TESOL)

2 In September 2003, ATESOL NSW announced that it would begin a process of revisiting the 1994 competencies document to see whether it needed updating, and also because it had never been formally ratified by ACTA.
Associations/Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). It set out “to produce a set of competency descriptions incorporating elements and performance indicators which would define the specialised field of TESOL teaching … in line with national developments regarding teacher competencies and competency statements in other professional areas” (Hogan 1994:1). The Reference Group included stakeholders from all ESL employer bodies and two NSW universities. It also drew on parts of the framework for Desirable Attributes of Beginning Teachers produced by the NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and the Quality of Teaching (MACTEQT) (Hogan 1994:Appendix A). The Reference Group adopted some of the competencies relating to ‘ethics’ and ‘professional development’, changed the MACTEQT document’s ‘content area’ to ‘knowledge’, and separated ‘knowledge’ and ‘practice’: “because it was seen as important to clarify the specialist knowledge a TESOL teacher has” (Hogan 1994:1). The four categories of TESOL Teacher Competencies as accepted by ATESOL then are:

Knowledge
Practice
Ethics of Teaching
Professionalism and Professional Development

The three competencies in the Knowledge component are:

1. Can demonstrate knowledge of language pedagogy
2. Can demonstrate knowledge of theoretical approaches to language and language learning

Each of these statements is expanded into several ‘elements’. Only those which the researcher deemed to have possible relevance to a consideration of teachers’ language learning experience are examined here. These are:

1.(i) can understand the process of second language development
2.(i) can understand that recent approaches to language teaching view language as a socio-cultural meaning system
2.(ii) can understand how language is structured for use
2.(v) can understand that learning a second language is part of the process of becoming bicultural (Hogan 1994:9-10).

Only one of the five ‘Practice’ competencies has been selected as having possible relevance to the research questions, and within it two elements:

2. Can provide opportunities for students to develop spoken and written English in a positive learning environment.
2.(ii) can acknowledge the role of students’ first language in second-language development
2.(iii) can utilise bilingual assistance effectively in a range of situations (Hogan 1994:14)

In addition, one of the statements of the original MACTEQT document which were also adopted reads:

“All beginning teachers need to have an understanding of the content of learning and teaching including the underlying structure of the subject matter and its relationship to other areas of knowledge” (cited in Hogan 1994: Appendix A – emphasis added). Knowledge of, or skill in, another language are not mentioned in these competencies. However, as will be discussed later, various kinds of ‘knowledge’ and ‘understanding’ are mentioned which it is reasonable to suggest might be greater in a teacher with second language learning experience.

2.6.2 Canada

TESL Canada is the national association of TESOL teachers and it has recently moved to set up national teacher qualifying standards, termed The TESL Canada National Professional Certification Standards (http://www.tesl.ca). They represent a teacher-driven initiative to create basic, minimum national standards and are broad statements of minimum standards of employability. They state that teachers must have teaching qualifications recognised by TESL Canada, a number of hours of teaching experience, and positive performance reviews. Teacher certification under this scheme exists at four levels. TESL Canada acknowledges that similar certification schemes exist in the provinces, and indeed TESL Ontario has worked on the establishment of professional
standards since 1996. Its *TESL Ontario Certificate for Instructors Teaching ESL to Adults in Non-Credit Programs in Ontario* (Sanaoui 1998) requires a formal undergraduate degree, TESL training, and TESL Ontario membership as well as evidence of ongoing professional development. It includes a statement of minimum requirements for content of TESOL training consisting of ‘Theory’ and ‘Methodology’ based on Garschick (1995). The ‘theory’ section includes:

a. Linguistics and English linguistics - the nature of language, its systematic organization, variation and change; major models of linguistic description; major subsystems of present-day English (grammatical, phonological/graphemic and lexical/semantic), its historical development and dialectical variation.

b. Psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics - language acquisition processes in first and second language learning, individual learning styles; factors affecting language learning; the adult learner; basic socio-cultural variables in language use and language learning, social determiners of dialect and style. (Sanaoui 1998)

Again we see statements of knowledge about language considered desirable for ESL teachers, but none about experience of language learning.

2.6.3 USA

TESOL is the USA and international professional association of ESOL teachers and it is currently drafting new professional standards. TESOL’s document *Draft Standards for Teaching Adult Learners* (TESOL 2003) includes a model of three concentric circles. In the centre is Student Learning, in the next circle is Planning, Instructing and Assessing, and the outer circle contains five standards: Language, Learning, Identity and Setting, Content, and Developing Professionalism. The sections in italics (emphasis added) are those which relate most directly to the research question here.

*Language refers to an understanding of what language is and how it is used.*

*Learning refers to an understanding of the learning process in formal and informal settings and the specific requirements and place of language in that process.*

*Identity and Setting focuses on who the learners are and how their communities, heritages, and goals shape learning and their experiences of*
learning. Content refers to the teacher having content-area expertise, knowing how to collaborate with content-area teachers, or being able to facilitate the independent learning of content. "Developing Professionalism" focuses on understanding the nature of ESL teaching as part of and in relation to the broader community, the broader teaching community, and the community of English language teaching professionals. (TESOL 2003 – emphasis added)

As in the case of Australia and Canada, the USA statement does not suggest that second language learning experience is a necessary or desirable component of knowledge about language. “Content area expertise” is undefined, and could be taken to mean expertise in English, expertise in language(s) or expertise in second language learning. The implications of different understandings of ‘content’ are discussed in Chapter 3.5.

2.6.4 UK

The British organisation which until recently set teacher qualification standards is the British Association of Teacher Qualifying Institutions (BATQI), but its work has been taken over by ARELS (the Association of Recognised English Language Schools) and BASELT (the British Association of State English Language Teaching). Both follow the British Council system for the recognition of teacher qualifications, which has three criteria which must be met. To receive British Council endorsement, a qualification must incorporate an independent validation process by a reputable examination body, and have a minimum of supervised teaching practice and a minimum number of hours of input. This appears to be the only national statement relating to TESOL teacher standards, and it clearly aims to be far broader than a specification of entry standards in language or anything else. The British Council also publishes details of available courses and employment. There is no mention of the need for second or foreign language proficiency on any of their public information Web sites.

The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) is the largest accreditor of non-tertiary TESOL training in Britain and overseas, and accredits the Certificate (CELTA) and Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA). Trinity College runs an equivalent scheme, the Trinity College Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Speakers of Other Languages. For none of these awards is second language proficiency mentioned as either necessary or desirable.
As with the above three English-speaking countries, none of the accrediting bodies in the UK stipulate language learning experience as necessary or valuable for ESOL teachers.

2.6.5 New Zealand

The Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Association of New Zealand (TESOLANZ) has commissioned a project, beginning in 1994, to develop a set of core competencies for the profession. In contrast to those considered above, the New Zealand document does make mention of second language learning experience. The TESOLANZ Draft Philosophy of Professional Standards states that:

ESOL teaching is a specialised, distinct professional field. Experience, training and ongoing professional development are all important as contributors to professional standards within the field. Teachers within the profession require particular knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience for the context in which they work.

(White 1997:15)

Through an extensive process of consultation which asked members to generate competency statements and then to rank an agreed set, a draft ‘Core Competencies Profile’ has been completed. The knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience referred to above have been broken down into discrete items and include those statements which received a mean rating between 4.01 and 4.97 on a scale of 1-5 (not important – very important) in the ranking done by members.

Of the statements presented to members for ranking, five appear relevant to this study.

ESOL teachers should:

- understand the process of second language development (4.46)
- understand the impact of L1 on language teaching (4.12)
- have experience in learning another language (4.04)
- have an understanding of bilingualism (3.81)
• have experience in a community language (2.74)

The last two were not included in the final set of competency statements because their mean ranking fell below 4.01, but the first three, including “ESOL teachers should have experience in learning another language” have been included in the final draft selection, which comprise the sections ‘Knowledge’, ‘Skills’, ‘Attitudes’, ‘Education’ and ‘Experience’.

The New Zealand profile is thus the only document of those examined here which specifically recognises experience in learning another language as being of value. The fact that “an understanding of bilingualism” and “experience in a community language” did not make it to the final list is interesting in view of a TESOL ANZ survey of members undertaken at the same time (Haddock 1998). The survey set out to establish the profile of the New Zealand TESOL profession in terms of age, gender, sector of employment, qualifications, work experience, professional support, language learning experience and community language proficiency. Results revealed that all respondents had had some language learning experience, but that very few claimed to speak ‘a community language’. Unfortunately neither ‘language learning experience’ nor ‘community language’ were clearly defined, a fact later lamented by the survey designers. If New Zealand TESOL teachers are, in the majority, native English-speaking, either monolingual, or with experience only of formal language learning in languages of the school curriculum, then this could possibly account for the lesser perceived importance of bilingualism and community language proficiency. There may then be a link between the fact that all respondents had L2 learning experience, and the recognition of the value of such learning, and another link between the fact that few had a community language, (therefore unlikely to view themselves as ‘bilingual’), and the lesser importance attached to these two competencies. These links must remain as pure speculation, however, especially in light of the fact that the return rate of both the competency ranking document and the member profile document was only 32% (Haddock 1998).
2.7 Summary and implications of statements of teacher qualifications, standards and competencies

There are similarities as well as differences in structure and emphasis between the Australian, British, Canadian, US and New Zealand statements of teacher standards, but the aim here is not to perform a detailed comparison. Rather, the point to be made here is that all the documents contain statements of desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience to which L2 proficiency and/or L2 learning experience could potentially contribute. The New Zealand model is the only one which explicitly states that “experience in learning another language” is a desirable part of an ESOL teacher’s professional attributes. A statement that the experience of studying another language should be ‘optional’ as part of specialist ESL teacher training was included in Derewianka and Hammond’s (1991) report on ESL within the school system, but even this tentative suggestion is absent from the literature on adult ESL.

Competency documents function as explicit statements about required professional knowledge and skill, and second language proficiency and second language learning experience figure in none of them (except, minimally, in the New Zealand one). In line with the focus of this thesis on the possible contribution of second language learning experience to teacher knowledge, the absence of mention of L2 learning in these documents raises the following questions about how such competencies might be differentially achieved by bilingual and monolingual teachers.

Regarding language:

How do bilingual and monolingual teachers come to an understanding of “what language is and how it is used” (USA) or “understand how language is structured for use” (Australia) or “understand …language as a socio-cultural meaning system” (Australia)?

Regarding the content of teaching:

How do bilingual and monolingual teachers understand “the … underlying structure of the subject matter and its relationship to other areas of knowledge” (Australia)?
What is the “content-area expertise” (USA) that ESL teachers need? Is it knowledge of the structure and use of English, or is it knowledge of language more broadly, or is it knowledge of second language learning as well? How might these various ‘knowings’ differ between bilingual and monolingual teachers?

**Regarding second language learning and the process of becoming bilingual:**

How do bilingual and monolingual teachers “understand the process of second language development” (Australia)?
How do bilingual and monolingual teachers see “how learners’ communities, heritages, and goals shape learning and their experiences of learning” (USA)?
How do bilingual and monolingual teachers “understand that learning a second language is part of the process of becoming bicultural” (Australia)?
How do bilingual and monolingual teachers “acknowledge the role of students’ first language in second-language development” (Australia)?
How do bilingual and monolingual teachers “utilise bilingual assistance effectively” (Australia)?

All of the desirable competencies which have been selected for quotation in the above questions are ones which it is reasonable to suggest may be more achievable, or achievable in qualitatively different ways, by a bilingual person who has personal experience of second language learning and use, as compared with a monolingual person.

The key question for the purposes of this thesis is:

- Are there differences arising from bilingual and monolingual experience in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which are considered necessary for TESOL teachers?

In the context of New Zealand’s recognition that experience in learning a second language is relevant, two further questions are raised:

- What does language learning experience contribute which makes it valuable to ESL teachers?
• How much and what kind of language learning experience is valuable?

This thesis will also examine, in Chapter 3.5, what is meant by ‘the subject matter’ (Hogan 1994) or ‘content area expertise’ (TESOL 2003) in ESL. It will contend that ‘subject matter’ is accepted as being ‘English language’ alone, rather than ‘English language’ and ‘second language learning’. Further it will suggest that its ‘relationship to other areas of knowledge (Hogan 1994) - namely other languages - is unexamined.

This chapter has provided a context in which to situate this study by reviewing relevant issues of a sociolinguistic and educational policy nature, and by providing an overview of the structure, history and practices of the Australian ESL profession. Together with the examination of entry standards and teacher education content, this discussion has shown how ESL has developed as a profession which pays little heed to teacher second language proficiency or teacher second language learning, or, in other words, which has a monolingual perspective. Finally, by examining statements of competency, and comparing them with those of other countries, it has demonstrated an international recognition that TESOL teachers need certain knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to be competent practitioners. It will be shown in Chapter 3.5, in a review of the teacher cognition literature, that knowledge and beliefs are crucial in any attempt to understand teacher competence. This thesis sets out to establish how language learning experience may contribute to the knowledge and beliefs which are clearly seen as desirable by the international profession. The research questions which form the basis of this study then are as follows.

2.8 Research questions

1. Does the language learning experience of teachers of ESL to adults contribute to their professional knowledge and beliefs?

2. If so, what kinds of language learning experience make a contribution and in what ways?
Chapter 3

Literature Review

As stated in the Introduction, five areas of literature were identified as being of value in investigating the research questions. Four of these were identified in the planning of the study, and one (3.3) at the data analysis stage when teachers’ beliefs about the role of L1 emerged as a key theme. The five sections of the literature review deal with:

3.1 Bilingualism and second language learning, in an attempt to find a useful definition of bilingualism for the study, and to investigate aspects of the experiences of bilinguals.
3.2 The value of language learning, to examine claims made about the intellectual and cultural benefits of L2 learning.
3.3 The role of L1 in the learning of L2, to examine theoretical and practical positions on this question.
3.4 Critical approaches to TESOL, in order to find out why there is silence on the question of teacher language learning.
3.5 Teacher cognition, in an attempt to understand how language learning experience may contribute to the formation of teacher knowledge and beliefs.

3.1 Bilingualism and second language learning

3.1.1 The field of bilingualism

The study of bilingualism encompasses a field which is both broad and cross-disciplinary. I shall briefly outline the main areas and disciplines in which bilingualism has been researched, and then state the aspects of the topic which are most relevant to the issue of bilingualism among teachers of adult ESL. Literature in these specific areas will then be reviewed.

The field of bilingualism crosses several academic disciplinary boundaries (Baker 2001), and different disciplines tend to study it from different perspectives (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981). Thus linguists tend to focus on the origin of bilingualism, or how people become bilingual, and definitions of bilingual competence. Sociologists tend to focus on
the function of each language and societal attitudes to each. Psychologists and psycholinguists might focus on the origin of bilingualism too while social psychologists and demographers have focussed respectively on attitudes and distribution of bilingual speakers. However over the past two decades there have been developments in the boundaries of all these disciplines, and it remains a huge challenge for scholars to develop an interdisciplinary approach to the study of bilingualism (Hamers and Blanc 2000:1). Romaine (1989) claims that several of these disciplines have treated bilingualism as incidental to their main concerns, and often as a deviant from a supposed norm. In fact it is bilingualism and multilingualism which are the norm worldwide, (Crystal 1987, Grosjean 1982), and perceptions that monolingualism is the norm are a product of the power and dominance of nation states with high status languages whose members have little need for other languages (Edwards 1994).

Bilingualism can be discussed as an individual phenomenon or a societal phenomenon (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981). Hamers and Blanc (1989, 2000) use the term ‘bilinguality’ to denote an individual’s use of two languages, and reserve ‘bilingualism’ for the study of how two or more languages function in a given society. However they do not suggest that it is possible to see each in isolation from the other, pointing out their interdependency:

Bilingualism must be approached as a complex phenomenon which simultaneously implies a state of bilinguality of individuals and a state of languages in contact at the collective level. Therefore this phenomenon should be studied at several levels of analysis: individual, interpersonal, intergroup and intersocietal. (Hamers and Blanc 2000:32)

This thesis is mainly concerned with ‘bilinguality’ rather than ‘bilingualism’ in Hamers and Blanc’s terms, since it is a study of ESL teachers’ second language proficiency and learning and how they may impact on their professional lives. However, inasmuch as bilinguality develops and is manifested in situated social ways, there will be mention of societal aspects of bilingualism at points when it is necessary in interpreting the findings.

Bilingualism in education looks at the pedagogical issues created when children speaking one language at home enter a school system which operates in another
language (Lotherington 2000, Liddicoat 1991). There are numerous programs all over the world which attempt to find the best way for children to become proficient in the dominant language or to acquire a minority or foreign language through varying degrees of “immersion” (Cummins and Swain 1986). Other studies and programs look at how children growing up in bilingual families acquire both languages, and how parents can help them to retain both (Saunders 1988, Beligan et al 1999).

In many countries bilingualism is closely tied to sociopolitical concerns such as education, health, citizenship and human rights, since the choices countries must make about their official language(s), language(s) of and in education, political process and public information have profound implications for access to these of minority language speakers as well as for retention of minority languages. Such issues have gained prominence through the development of the concept of “linguistic human rights” (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995, Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a). Since many languages in which populations are bilingual are endangered, the study of threatened languages is also linked to the phenomenon of bilingualism and language maintenance (Fishman 1991, Walsh and Yallop 1993).

Some authors say that the discussion of bilingualism can easily be expanded to talk about multilingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:81) but there is an increasing focus on multilingualism as a distinguishable phenomenon in its own right. This is evidenced by the growing research on third language learning (Jessner 1999, Herdina and Jessner 2002, Tokuhama-Espinosa 2003) and the establishment of a new journal in 2003, the ‘International Journal of Multilingualism’ by the publisher of the existing journal ‘International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism’. Just as a bilingual speaker is more than a double monolingual, having unique synergetic characteristics resulting from the linguistic and social interplay of two languages (Grosjean 1985, 1999), it is reasonable to suggest that multilingualism may feature an exponential increase in complexity, rather than simply being treble or quadruple monolingualism.

Having briefly outlined the main sub-fields within the study of bilingualism, I shall now focus on work which has been undertaken in the study of bilinguality in individuals, and particularly those elements which are most relevant to the research questions. First, it is important to consider definitions of bilinguality since it was necessary for the study to develop a mechanism for distinguishing bilingual from monolingual teachers.
Definitions of bilinguality tend to refer to issues of relative competence in each language, and to the route taken to become bilingual, and so each of these are considered. Further aspects relevant to bilinguality among ESL teachers are affective aspects, or how bilinguals feel personally about their own bilingualism, and about bilingual language use. Bilingual language use is relevant to the topic of this thesis because the focus is on describing not only what teachers know in terms of other languages, but also what they do with their languages. Even though only one of the teachers in the study was teaching a bilingual class (ie using two languages to teach), all the bilingual teachers had the potential to use two languages. This issue is also relevant to a contention of the thesis that ESL learners are learning to be bilingual, and consideration of what bilingual language use is, is central to a discussion of whether monolingual or bilingual teachers are equipped with knowledge and experience to help learners to become additive bilinguals (Lambert 1974). The aspects of the literature on bilinguality which will be discussed here, then, are the following:

- Definitions and dimensions of bilinguality
- Relative competence
- Routes to bilingualism
- The bilingual person
- Bilingual language use

### 3.1.2 Definitions and dimensions of bilinguality

Hamers and Blanc (2000:6) define bilinguality as:

…the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication: the degree of access will vary along a number of dimensions which are psychological, cognitive, psycholinguistic, social psychological, sociological, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and linguistic.

The above definition is useful because it is purposely broad and imprecise: it does not attempt to define the level of proficiency, as did earlier attempts at defining bilinguality which are discussed below. It focusses on access to more than one, thus including multilinguality, linguistic code which does not restrict us to national languages, or even to languages, but includes varieties, as a means of social communication, focussing on
purposeful use rather than technical competence, and side-stepping the question of native-speaker standards which have preoccupied many previous writers.

Hamers and Blanc (2000) present a number of dimensions on which to judge bilinguality. These are: relative competence in each language, or proficiency; cognitive organisation (compound or co-ordinate bilingualism) (Ervin and Osgood 1954), age of acquisition and simultaneous or consecutive acquisition, exogeneity, sociocultural status, or how each language is valued, and cultural identity, or how far a person identifies with each speech community. Valdés and Figueroa (1994) suggest six dimensions which are age, ability, balance, development (or recession), context of acquisition, and lastly circumstantial versus elective bilingualism. The latter distinction is discussed in the section on ‘routes to bilingualism’.

In considering the language background of ESL teachers, the key dimensions include relative competence in each language and age of acquisition - eg childhood, adolescence or adulthood. Age of acquisition tends to have an influence on manner of acquisition (learning in the family or formal school learning), although this latter question is one more aligned with the field of second language acquisition (SLA) theory than with the field of bilingualism. However, it is in line with the question about the origin of bilingualism, which, as mentioned above, has always been part of the bilingualism research agenda. Cultural identity is also a relevant dimension, particularly in terms of the personal affect, or ‘affiliation’ (Rampton 1990) bilinguals may feel about one or more of their languages.

Hamers and Blanc also refer to language use, but claim that this is not a dimension, but an expression of one or more of the other dimensions. They justify this by saying that the notion of ‘use’ presumes that the bilingual has access to both codes and therefore must have a minimal competence in both (Hamers and Blanc 2000:30). This is not to say, however, that they ignore language use as an important, indeed central part of bilinguality, but that they do not consider it as a defining dimension. Their contention is quite different from that of Mackey (1970:554) who takes a functional view, namely that: “bilingualism is not a phenomenon of language; it is a characteristic of its use”.

29
3.1.3 Relative competence

Relative competence in each language has often been used as a definitional criterion and is therefore fundamental to thinking about bilinguality. Bilingualism researchers have long debated the question: ‘How proficient in each language does a person have to be to be called bilingual’? One of the earliest definitions of bilingual competence is “a native-like control of two languages” (Bloomfield 1933:56), although authors who cite this as an example of an absolutist definition rarely mention that Bloomfield goes on to qualify it by saying “[o]f course, one cannot define a degree of perfection at which a good foreign speaker becomes a bilingual: the distinction is relative” (Bloomfield 1933:56). However it is true to say that definitions of bilingual competence have ranged from an insistence on ‘native-speaker’ competence (and we shall see in a later sub-section how problematic the notion of a uniform native-speaker competence is) to minimalist definitions. Thiery (1978:146) maintained that a ‘true bilingual’ is someone “who is taken to be one of themselves by the members of two different linguistic communities, at roughly the same social and cultural level”. At the opposite end of the scale are extremely liberal interpretations such as that of Macnamara (1967) that bilingualism begins when a person possesses even a minimal degree of proficiency in at least one of the macro-skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. This idea is echoed in Diebold’s (1964) assertion that ‘incipient bilingualism’ begins with the recognition of words in another language. The problem with such absolutist definitions is that at one end almost everyone in the world is excluded (Grosjean 1982:30) and at the other end almost everyone is included (Romaine 1989:39).

More useful is Haugen’s (1969:6-7) notion of a continuum of bilinguality, “…begin[ning] at the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language. From here it may proceed through all possible gradations up to the kind of skill that enables a person to pass as a native in more than one linguistic environment”.

This idea of a continuum has been acknowledged by many (Baldauf 1993) and expanded by subsequent researchers to encompass several continua. These might include proficiency in the four macro-skills and proficiency in domains of use such as home, work, study or narrower ones such as talk or writing on specific topics, for example the topics of computer use or baby care. It is now widely recognised that
perfect ‘balanced bilinguals’ who have equal proficiency in all aspects of both their languages are rare indeed, and that most bilinguals have one dominant language, or have dominance in some domains with one language and in others with the other language. There are many degrees of bilingualism, and there may be variation within the same person over time (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998).

3.1.4 Routes to bilinguality

Just as there are many degrees of bilinguality, there are varied routes to achieving bilinguality and reasons for doing so, (Baker 2001) and a range of routes and reasons were evident among the bilingual teachers in the study, as is reported in Chapter 5. Numerous authors have proposed differences in types of bilingualism and routes to bilingualism (Baker and Prys Jones 1998, Baker 2001, Grosjean 1982, 1999, Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, Baetens Beardsmore 1986, Saunders 1988, Romaine 1989, 1995, Hamers and Blanc, 1989, 2000). A person may learn two languages from birth in the home (simultaneous acquisition (Letts 1999)), or learn the second language later from other carers, in the wider community, or in any of the levels of schooling (sequential bilinguality). After childhood, a second language may be learned through formal study, through less structured adult learning contexts, through individual study, or by travelling, working and/or living in another country. These routes to bilinguality are not mutually exclusive, and an individual may acquire a second, or indeed a third or fourth language by a combination of any of them. As Kennett (2003) shows in her study of adult second language learners, an amalgam of various ways of learning and progressing in a language is the norm.

Reasons for becoming bilingual are both social and individual. The motivation may be that two or more languages are spoken in the family, or that the family speaks a language other than the dominant one of the surrounding community. Or, as do over half the world’s population, (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998) the individual may reside in a country or community where two or more languages are spoken on a daily basis. Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished integrative from instrumental motivation, arguing that the former is a more effective predictor of successful learning. However as Ellis (1994) points out, both of these models rely on an assumption of ‘internal cause’ of motivation, and this is only one of four possible sources of motivation, of which the others are ‘intrinsic’, ‘resultative’ and ‘carrot and stick’ or external influences and
incentives (Skehan 1989). More recently, Clyne (2003) has argued for a greater recognition of the role and force of ‘intrinsic motivation’, or the love of languages *per se*, which has received little investigation (Ellis 1994, Clyne 2003).

A particularly useful distinction between routes to bilinguality has been made by Valdés and Figueroa (1994) between ‘circumstantial bilingualism’ and ‘elective bilingualism’. Circumstantial bilinguals are those who learn another language to survive, because of the circumstances in which they find themselves. Two or more languages are needed in order to function in the family and/or society at large, as in the situation in which immigrants find themselves. Elective bilinguals are those who choose to learn another language, often (but not necessarily) a high-status national language or a language of international communication. This distinction echoes to a certain extent that made by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:97) between ‘folk’ and ‘elite’ bilingualism, but ‘elective’ allows for any language or variety learned by choice, instead of restricting us to so-called ‘elite’ contexts. Elective bilingualism is about choice, and circumstantial bilingualism is about lack of choice, or necessity (Baker 2001). We shall return to this distinction in Chapter 5 in order to look at the ways in which the teachers in this study became bilingual.

In discussing routes to bilingualism, it is necessary to mention the research into the effects of age on the development of second languages which has been largely undertaken within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research, and which is vast (Ellis 1994). As Baker (2001) acknowledges, the influence of age on SLA has been hotly debated, and much has tended to focus on whether there is a ‘critical period’ for development of a second language, after which an individual cannot attain native-speaker-level competence (Ellis 1994). (Davies (1991, 2003) reminds us that ‘native speaker competence’ is itself an elusive and variable concept and this is discussed in Chapter 3.1.7. Researchers have studied the effects of age on the rate, processes and ultimate achievement in L2, and of acquiring different aspects of the L2, for example phonology, grammaticality judgement and pragmatic competence. Hakuta (1999) concludes that:

> The evidence for a critical period for second language acquisition is scanty, especially when analyzed in terms of its key assumptions...
biologically constrained and specialized language acquisition device that is turned off at puberty is not correct. (Hakuta 1999:11-12)

Singleton (1989) states that younger learners are neither globally more nor less efficient or successful than older learners, and that too many factors and variations in context are in interplay to make generalisable statements. Baker’s view is that there are no critical periods, but there are ‘advantageous periods’ for example early childhood and school days (Baker 2001). Scovel (1999), a prolific researcher into age and SLA, suggests that all things being equal, second language learning is most efficient and effective after childhood, although most researchers now agree that phonological ‘perfection’ is only achievable pre-puberty. A key point, however, is that in language learning all things never are equal when comparing adults and children: for example adults are rarely able to access such intensive one-to-one scaffolded linguistic input as do children. Scovel (1999:284) concludes that: “[g]iven the… pervasiveness of bilingualism and foreign language learning in virtually every nation, it is not surprising to conclude that humans are effective language learners at any age”.

In other words, while there are differences in processes, rate and outcomes between adult and childhood second language learning, people of any age can and do achieve high levels of bilingualism. This fact is acknowledged in current widely-accepted views of bilinguals as varying in competence in and use of each language (Grosjean 1999). The attainment of native-speaker-like competence in two languages is no longer regarded as a valid definition of bilinguality, as discussed earlier, and so the issue of whether adults or children are more likely to achieve it is no longer a key question.

Finally, a distinction needs to be made between those bilinguals who use their multi-language skills daily, or regularly, and those who have the skills but are not in a position to use them. Baker (2001) discusses this in terms of the language background of bilinguals, which may include, for example, the ability to understand, but not speak, the language spoken by a mother to a father but not directly to a child, as opposed to functional bilingualism, or the bilingual’s direct involvement with the use of a language. Grosjean (1999:285) refers to the distinction between those who “lead their lives with two (or more) languages” and those who are no longer using their different languages but have retained knowledge of them, whom he terms “dormant bilinguals”.

33
The various routes to bilinguality, and reasons for attaining bilinguality have been reviewed here as a prelude to discussion of the teachers’ bilinguality in Chapter 5, and to the discussion of its effects on their professional knowledge and beliefs in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. The bilingual experience of the teachers in the study varied widely, as does ESL students’ experience of bilinguality. At least part of the students’ experience includes formal instruction in the ESL classroom, and the extent to which this is shared by their teachers is discussed in the later chapters.

3.1.5 The bilingual person

The importance of affective aspects of second language learning and use are widely recognised in the fields of second language acquisition and bilingualism. In the present study, there were a number of indicators that teachers saw their own bilinguality, or lack of it, as an important aspect of their personal and social selves. Literature which examines the bilingual as a person in terms of affiliation, belonging and identity is reviewed below.

Edwards (2003) claims that language is generally accepted as an important marker of identity, and that there is evidence that bilinguals’ use of each language reveals different aspects of their personality. He rejects outright, however, beliefs from earlier times that bilinguals must have a ‘dual personality’. Grosjean (1982) attributes these beliefs to the fact that bilinguals have been frequently studied from a monolingual perspective, and that what may seem to be two personalities is in fact a shift in attitudes and behaviours which correspond to a shift in context. This explanation sits well with the current focus of bilingualism studies on how bilinguals use their languages differentially according to context (Baker 2001). Baker emphasises that the bilingual person is a complete and integrated linguistic whole, who uses his or her languages with different people, in different contexts and to achieve different purposes (Baker 2001:9).

Edwards makes a distinction between personal and social identity, and in discussing the latter makes a further distinction between bilinguals who have a kinship linkage to each language group, and bilinguals who have acquired “another linguistic citizenship” in a more formal way. He claims that both can be considered “borderers”: those who live on borders which are not necessarily geographic, but also intellectual, social and emotional
(Edwards 2003:36-37). He goes on to argue that the importance of being bilingual is social and psychological rather than linguistic:

> Beyond types, categories, methods and processes is the essential animating tension of identity. Beyond utilitarian and unemotional instrumentality, the heart of bilingualism is belonging. (Edwards 2003:41)

Rampton (1990) touches on this idea of belonging in his argument for re-thinking traditional ideas about the terms ‘mother tongue’ and ‘native speaker’. He argues that in addition to the notion of ‘expertise’ in language (which is relevant to arguments about the proficiency of bilinguals, but not particularly to issues of identity), we should think in terms of *language inheritance* and *affiliation*. The key point about these concepts is that both are social processes and are therefore negotiated rather than involving fixed relationships.

The relationships between bilingual proficiency and identity are extremely complex (Hamers and Blanc 2000). As Edwards (2003) points out, people belong to many groups, and all groups – including language groups – have characteristics which mark their identity. Bicultural are usually bilingual, but bilinguals need not necessarily be biculural (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998): their bilingualism provides only the potential for biculturalism. Rather than attempting to establish or define particular relationships between bilinguality and forms of identity, it is probably more fruitful to see the two as existing in a kind of dynamic tension whereby they are constantly redefined according to changing interpersonal and social contexts. Norton Peirce (1995) takes such a perspective when she argues for the need to develop a theory of social identity which can be used to interpret and explain language use and language learning in second language contexts. In a later paper (Norton 1997) she compares the social identity theories of West (1992), Bourdieu (1977b) and Weedon (1987) and their various focuses on material power, symbolic power and social power in an attempt to develop an explanation of subjectivity of the second language user. Although her focus is on second language learners, the points she makes are also relevant to second language users in other contexts, since, as Baker (2001) implies, wherever bilingualism exists individually or societally there arise questions of power, prestige and status.
Heller’s (1999) work on bilinguals in French-speaking Canada refers to changing concepts of bilinguals’ identity, from one focussed on conserving a minority language and culture to one which sees their linguistic resources as assets in the new global economy. She proposes that bilinguals are people who are skilled at crossing boundaries (Heller 1999), echoing Edwards’ (2003) talk of ‘borderers’, and argues that this is a key skill in the twenty-first century workplace.

Rampton’s (1990) establishment of the terms ‘inheritance’ and ‘affiliation’ as social processes rather than immutable givens recognises the complexity and fluidity of the feelings and emotions with which people imbue their languages. He maintains that affiliation can sometimes involve a stronger sense of attachment than inheritance, a suggestion which has not commonly been recognised. It has often been assumed that strong affective feelings, and identification with a speech community, only occur as a result of growing up with a language, or early bilingualism. An example of a very powerful affiliation is that in Lvovich’s (1997) account of her language life, one of a growing number of autobiographical accounts of language learning and identity realised through language (see also Pavlenko 2001). Lvovich grew up in the former Soviet Union and developed a great passion for the French language and culture, although she was not able to visit France until later in her life. She recounts immersing herself in French-ness as an intellectual and emotional escape from what she saw as the barrenness of her Soviet life. Although it was a language she learned formally it became the cornerstone of her life and identity at that time: a clear example of ‘affiliation’ to a ‘foreign’ language.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) propose the metaphor of ‘participation’ as an alternative to ‘acquisition’ in second language acquisition. They point out that ‘acquisition’ creates a notion of language as a set of rules and facts which it is possible to ‘get’ and to ‘have’. ‘Participation’, on the other hand, conjures up a notion of becoming part of a language community, and shifts the focus to language use in context and issues of affiliation and belonging. They then use this new metaphor in SLA to argue for the importance of studying language biographies, or narratives, as a way of understanding second language learning, bilingualism and multilingualism (Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). Their work contributes to a growing perspective which blurs the lines between bilingualism theory and second language acquisition theory, and in this paper they investigate little-researched cases of adult late bilinguals who attempt to become native speakers of their
second language. Talking, like Edwards (2003) and Heller (1999), of ‘border crossings’ they examine how the bilinguals in their study reconstructed their identity through becoming full participants in the discursive practices of another culture.

Grosjean (1999) gives a brief survey of feelings and attitudes relating to bilingualism, both those of bilinguals themselves and those of monolinguals. He claims that surveys of bilinguals show that they either have no strong feelings about their bilingualism, seeing it as an unremarkable fact of life, or that they see more advantage than inconveniences therein. The reactions of monolinguals, he states, are extremely varied, and range from wonder at the fact that it is possible to use two languages fluently, to negative attitudes such as surprise that bilinguals do not master both languages ‘perfectly’, or their inability to translate spontaneously.

Bilinguality is intricately linked with issues of personal and social identity, as discussed above, and this issue will be raised in the following chapters in discussing the teachers’ views of themselves as second language learners and users. The next section will look at how two languages are used by bilingual speakers, and how such use has been conceptualised by researchers in different ways.

3.1.6 Bilingual language use

Teachers of ESL who do have a second language are rarely able to use it in their professional lives, as documented in Chapter 2. One of the arguments of this thesis is that this state of affairs results in some teachers being effectively ‘silenced bilinguals’ since they operate in a professionally monolingual environment, while being surrounded by students who are either bilingual, multilingual, or becoming bilingual. The fact that ESL teachers’ role is to help their students acquire a second language, ie. to become bilingual, leads us to consider another aspect of bilinguality, which is how bilinguals use their two languages. A consideration of research into bilingual language use will lay the groundwork for considering, in the light of the data chapters, whether teachers engage in bilingual language use, and in what ways they may be equipped to prepare their students for life as bilinguals.

Thinking about bilinguals’ use of their languages has often been clouded, or even ‘tainted’ (Grosjean 1985), by the use of such terms as ‘ideal bilingual’, ‘full bilingual’
and ‘balanced bilingual’, which suggest that there are other less complete forms of bilingualism (Romaine 1995). It was shown in Chapter 3.1.3 how definitions of individual bilingual proficiency have varied over time from those emphasising native-speaker levels of proficiency to those proposing a minimal competence in the second language. Assumptions about what constitutes ‘proper’ use of two languages has varied along the same lines, and until approximately two decades ago, many researchers advocated that a ‘true bilingual’ would keep their two languages separate and refrain from mixing them (Baker 2001). A major shift in thinking about bilingual language use occurred with the publication of Grosjean’s (1985) paper challenging the prevailing monolingual or fractional view of bilingualism, and calling for recognition of the bilingual as “a competent but specific speaker-hearer” (Grosjean 1985:467). Grosjean maintained that the monolingual view characterises the bilingual as two monolinguals in one person, and one aspect of this is that contact and overlap between the two languages is seen as accidental, anomalous and less than desirable (Grosjean 1985). A more realistic picture of the bilingual is as an integrated whole with a unique and specific configuration of language suited to and adapted to the bilingual’s individual and social circumstances (Grosjean 1985, 1999, Baker 2001). Thus the two (or more) languages form a total linguistic repertoire for achieving social purposes, just as one language does for a monolingual. Cummins (1980) in his research with bilingual children developed the concept of ‘common underlying proficiency’ which emphasises that two languages are underpinned by one system of thought, and this psycholinguistic concept supports a wholistic view of the bilingual.

A major characteristic of bilingual language use is that the two languages are used in different domains, with different people, in different contexts, and it is therefore not a matter of one language duplicating the repertoire of the other. Another major characteristic of bilingual language use is code-switching, sometimes known as code-shifting. Like other aspects of bilinguality, code-switching has often been seen in the past as evidence of inferior competence in one or both languages (Hamers and Blanc 2000). Romaine (1995) takes Gumperz’ definition of code-switching which is: “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems”. (Gumperz 1982:59)

Before considering how and why code-switching occurs, it is valuable to consider Grosjean’s (1999) contention that in everyday encounters bilinguals find themselves
positioned somewhere along a continuum of ‘language modes’. At one end is a totally monolingual mode where the bilingual is talking to a monolingual user of one of his or her languages. At the other, the bilingual is in communication with another bilingual person who shares the same two languages and thus permits the possibility of switching in all sorts of ways. In between these two extremes are a number of other possibilities. Various authors outline the functions which code-switching performs, and current theories all stress that it is a creative, purposeful use of both languages which is finely tuned to both situational and interpersonal context (Baker 2001, Clyne 1985, Grosjean 1985, 1999, Romaine 1995, Hamers and Blanc 2000). Code-switching may take place at extra-sentential levels, intersentential levels and intrasentential levels (Hamers and Blanc 2000), and can be examined from a linguistic perspective which examines how it functions grammatically (Hamers and Blanc 2000, Romaine 1995, Myers-Scotton 2003) or sociolinguistically (Baker 2001). Baker outlines twelve overlapping purposes of codeswitching, including to emphasise a point, to reinforce a request or command, to communicate friendship or solidarity, to ease tension, or to exclude other people. Social and political factors also frequently prompt code-switching (Baker 2001) in order to define, or redefine relationships between individuals of different social, linguistic, religious, ethnic or national allegiances. Porte (2003) refers to the ‘verbal display’ function of code-switching common among bilingual friends, whereby he noted Spanish morphological endings tacked onto English words (for example ‘talkando’), which is probably a peculiarly bilingual version of the creative linguistic play in which all humans indulge (Crystal 1998).

In addition to the literature on code-switching there is increasing attention being paid to the effects of L2 on the L1, in contexts where L2 is the most-used language (Pavlenko 2000). Effects of the L1 on the L2 have long been studied by SLA researchers under the rubrics of ‘interference’, (Ellis 1985), ‘transfer’ (Odlin 1989) and ‘cross-linguistic influence’ (Sharwood-Smith and Kellerman 1986). However this process can also work in reverse: Clyne (1985) shows that bilinguals in immigrant societies draw on the L2 for lexical renewal in the L1. Studies which look at this phenomenon, that is the effects of a later-acquired language on the first (Pavlenko 2000, Cook 2003a, 2003b, Porte 2003) are indicative of a recognition of language learning and use as dynamic systems (Herdina and Jessner 2002, Jessner 2003). These authors refer to the ‘dynamism of multilingualism’ as the processes of language development, language forgetting, language stability and language maintenance which are normal parts of multilinguals’
language repertoires. Snow and Hakuta (1992), too, recognise that the ability to function in a language in given contexts may wax and wane with circumstances. They argue that the skill of ‘speaking a second language’ cannot be compared with that of ‘riding a bicycle’ as it often is, meaning that once learned it is never forgotten. Instead they propose that use of a second language is more like dancing the lead role in the ballet ‘Giselle’ in that it takes not only training and practice, but current and maintained performance to ensure that some of the ‘steps’ are not forgotten (Snow and Hakuta 1992:387).

The views discussed here acknowledge and legitimise the reality of the interplay between languages in bilingual individuals, and recognise the gains, shifts, losses and attrition which happen over time and in accordance with social and linguistic contexts. This notion is important in considering the language background of ESL teachers, many of whom, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, have little opportunity to maintain their languages.

The five sections above have covered issues from the field of bilingualism studies which are pertinent to the consideration of the bilinguality, or lack of it, of ESL teachers. These were: definitions and dimensions of bilinguality; views of relative competence; routes to bilinguality; the bilingual as a person and bilingual language use. There are two further topics which lie at the intersection of bilingual theory and ESL professional practice which need consideration here. One is the matter of the status and merits of native and non-native English speaker teachers, and the other is the conflation in the profession of the term ‘native English speaker’ with ‘monolingual’ and of the term ‘bilingual’ with ‘non-native English speaker’. These aspects are discussed in the next two sections.

3.1.7 Native and non-native English speaker teachers

In the context of ESL teaching, native English speakers clearly have different linguistic experiences from those of non-native English speakers. While there are moves to abolish the distinction in a formal sense, the issues of their varying skills and abilities is
a vexed question in the profession and deserves review here as a foundation for
discussion of the native and non-native speaker teachers in the study.\(^3\)

In a practical sense the terms ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ are well
understood in the field of English language teaching. Sharp distinctions exist worldwide
in employment opportunities, promotion opportunities and even pay scales between
teachers who have English as a first language and those who have English as a second
or third language. Students of English often have strong preferences for native speaker
teachers (Takada 2000, Widdowson 1992). In a very real sense, then, non-native
teachers tend to suffer second-class status in both English-speaking and other countries.
Canagarajah (1999a) both refer to the paradox of the American education system, which
willingly accepts students from overseas onto MA TESOL courses but then limits their
employment opportunities as ESL teachers, once qualified, on the grounds that they are
non-native speakers.

Who, then, exactly, is a native speaker? Many have debated whether the native/non-
native speaker distinction can be precisely defined since the publication of Paikeday’s
(1985) ‘The Native Speaker is Dead!’). Several writers have pointed to the slipperiness
of the concept of the native speaker: most notably Davies (1991, 2003) who discusses it
from psycholinguistic, linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. He concludes that
ultimately the native/non-native distinction is one of “confidence and identity” and that
“to be a native speaker means not being a non-native speaker” (Davies 1991:166). The
circularity of this definition is self-evident, but it shows us clearly that while we cannot
state empirically what a native speaker is, in social life and in the classroom we know
who is and who isn’t. Halliday concurs with this in saying that the distinction serves a
purpose for the very reason that it is not possible to define it absolutely (conversation
with Paikeday, in Paikeday 1985:64).

A dissatisfaction with the use of the term ‘native speaker’ is expressed by Rampton
(1990) who, in the absence of agreement on its meaning, proposes the categories of
‘expertise’ to describe proficiency, and ‘language loyalty’ to describe levels of social
identification with a language. ‘Expertise’, he argues, does away with the implication

\(^3\) In the context of this thesis, henceforth ‘native speaker’ should be taken to mean ‘native speaker of
English’ and ‘non-native speaker’ should be taken to mean ‘non-native speaker of English’.
that language ability is of necessity inborn. Expertise can be achieved, and levels of expertise vary. The term ‘language loyalty’, he maintains, expresses the symbolic and emotive qualities found in ‘native speaker’ and ‘mother tongue’ while not conflating them with linguistic issues.

Cook (1999) discusses a range of definitions of the term ‘native-speaker’ from Bloomfield’s (1933) allegedly first use of the term to those prevalent in the 1990s. He concludes that of the nine characteristics of native speakers discussed, none are indispensable except one: “that a person is a native speaker of the language learned first” (Cook 1999:187). Cook’s call for language teaching to ‘go beyond the (concept of the) native speaker’ involves a timely and thorough examination of the concept. He maintains that it is a matter of “adjusting the perspectives about models that underlie language teaching” … [to] bring language teaching to the realization that it is helping people use L2s, not imitate native speakers” (Cook 1999:204).

Despite the debate about its very existence, the idea of the native speaker as the ideal teacher and arbiter of ‘correct’ usage and pronunciation persists. Phillipson (1992a) refers to this as ‘the native speaker fallacy’ and maintains that it results in the devaluing of non-native teachers. There are perhaps two main explanations for the emergence and persistence of native speaker dominance in ELT. One is that it tied in neatly with Chomskyan notions of the ‘ideal speaker’ who could be taken as the reference point and ultimately the arbiter of what constitutes a grammatical version of the language. Thus the native speaker is the only one with a full complement of ‘competence’ against which instances of language learning or using could be compared.

The other explanation is, as Phillipson (1992b) points out, that insistence on the superiority of the native speaker has facilitated the development of what is now a massive world-wide industry: the training and deployment of teachers and curriculum developers all over the world. The insistence on the use of the target language as the medium of instruction (as in the Direct Method) means that a qualified native speaker teacher can be deployed anywhere without necessarily knowing the language or culture

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4 Cook’s assertion seems to ignore questions of language attrition and language shift common in immigrant-receiving countries such as Australia. Many adults who become dominant in English effectively lose their “language learned first”. Is it still possible to be a ‘native speaker’ of Polish when you can understand only a little of it and can say even less?
of his or her students. In this way English-speaking, or Inner Circle countries, to use Kachru’s (1995) term, maintain their control of the ELT profession.

The Hungarian writer and EFL teacher educator Medgyes is one who wishes to retain the distinction between native and non-native, despite its theoretical problems, for the reason that, as stated earlier, we know who is one and who isn’t. “In short, [Robert] Kaplan is a native speaker of English and I am not” (Medgyes, 1999:178). He warns, however, against the danger of equating a competent speaker with a competent teacher. This is precisely the problem: very often it has been assumed that the native speaker makes a better teacher because he or she provides a better model of the language - more fluent, more idiomatic, more current and with ‘better’ pronunciation. Canagarajah (1999a) argues that this notion that the native speaker is better placed to teach the language is at odds with many of our current beliefs in applied linguistics. We accept, for instance, that all languages and dialects have equal value, that language learning is an active mental and social process by the learner not solely conditioned by the teacher, and that language use is determined by context. Yet alongside these widely-agreed beliefs there persists a view that learners will be disadvantaged by being taught in one of the many varieties of English spoken by non-native speakers (Canagarajah 1999a).

The view of non-native teachers as second-best ignores one of the basic tenets of teacher education: that not only subject knowledge (that is, knowledge of, and competence in the English language) but also pedagogical skills are crucial to good teaching (Richards 1998). As Widdowson (1992) reminds us, a teacher is both informant and instructor, and while native speakers may be better informants, they are not necessarily better instructors. They have more experience as English language users, but non-native speakers have had experience as English language learners. Liu (1999a), too, asserts that it is undeniable that the English learning experiences of non-native teachers are helpful for learners. O’Neill also argues that non-native teachers have one enormous advantage: that “they have actually learned the target language as foreigners and have direct insight into and experience of the processes involved for other non-native speakers” (O’Neill 1991:304). (Emphasis in the original)

Until a couple of decades ago there was little literature on the non-native speaker teacher, despite the fact that they do the bulk of English language teaching worldwide (Phillipson 1992a, Rinvolucri 2001). The literature which has looked at the question
since then has been largely devoted to exploring the definition of native/non-native status, or in comparing the two on linguistic bases. There is now, however, increasing interest in the knowledge, experience and skills which non-native speaker teachers have to offer in ESOL teaching in their own right, rather than as a poor imitation of native speakers (Braine 1999, Liu 1999a, 1999b, Medgyes 1994, Årva and Medgyes 2000, Cook 1999, Ellis 2002). The kinds of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills (procedural knowledge) which may be characteristic of native English speakers and non-native English speakers will be examined in Chapter 3.5.

3.1.8 The conflation of ‘native speaker’ with ‘monolingual’, and of ‘bilingual’ with ‘non-native speaker’

This section demonstrates that there is a tendency within the ESL profession to use the terms ‘bilingual’, ‘monolingual’, ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ in ways which are sometimes inaccurate and confusing. In the field of ESL, all monolingual teachers are native-speakers of English, but not all native English speakers are monolinguals. All non-native English speaker teachers are bilingual by definition, but not all bilingual teachers are non-native speakers of English. Stated bluntly in this way, these propositions seem obvious, indisputable and scarcely worth stating. However I shall go on to show that in the professional literature there is considerable blurring and even confusion of these terms. Native speakers are frequently referred to as ‘monolinguals’, and ‘bilinguals’ are assumed to be non-native speakers. I suggest that the conflation and misuse of these terms does much to confuse important issues to do with the language skills and language background of both native and non-native speaker teachers. It misrepresents both, as well as preventing clear-headed discussion of issues pertaining to monolingual and bilingual teachers, and monolingual and bilingual teaching.

The following are examples of conflation or of unclear use of terms. O’Grady (1987:176), in advocating the provision of bilingual classes for beginners, suggests that “all but a few elderly learners would welcome a monolingual teacher as their English proficiency develops”. The meaning of ‘monolingual’ here is ambiguous. It could mean a teacher who teaches monolingually, using English-only in class, but such a teacher could well be bilingual, in which case to describe him or her as ‘monolingual’ is inaccurate. Or it could mean ‘native speaker teacher’, since in the context of this quote
the only teachers referred to as ‘bilingual’ are non-native speakers. Later, in attempting to counter criticism of non-native teachers’ pronunciation, O’Grady (1987:177) states that “AMES bilingual teachers are highly proficient speakers of English…”. It is clear that ‘bilingual’ is being used here to mean ‘non-native teacher’, since this statement made about bilingual native-speaker teachers would be tautologous. Non-native speaker teachers are also referred to as ‘bilingual teachers’ by Forman (1994), Kershaw (1996), Masters (1993) and Yip and Nguyen (1985).

Another example, this time from the international educational literature, is that of Handsfield (2002:555), who, in rejecting Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000b) criticism of monolingual teachers, maintains that teacher bilinguality is irrelevant, since most school systems with students of many language backgrounds do not have the resources to provide bilingual instruction in all languages. Handsfield here, writing in the USA, is assuming that the only value of teacher bilinguality is in the ability to provide mother-tongue instruction. In Handsfield’s comment we see a parallel with an unspoken yet clearly fundamental principle in Australian ESL as reviewed in Chapter 2. This is that since it is impractical to provide bilingual teaching for all students, teacher bilinguality has no relevance. For Handsfield, then, ‘bilingual teacher’ equates with ‘bilingual teaching’, and, since the latter is impossible in most cases, monolingual teachers are not considered problematic.

Some of the confusion arises from the fact that in ESL teaching, ‘monolingual’ and ‘bilingual’ can be used to refer to teachers, to students, to a class grouping of students, or to a method of teaching. These distinctions are often not made clearly enough, with the result that assumptions go unchallenged, skills go unacknowledged, and possibilities for different approaches go unexamined.

A ‘monolingual teacher’ may be:

- a teacher who speaks only English and no other languages at all; or
- a teacher who teaches monolingually – that is, using English-only, regardless of his or her other language skills. Although this teacher might be a native speaker (NS) or a non-native speaker (NNS), in practice a NNS is not referred to as a ‘monolingual teacher’ by virtue of teaching monolingually.
A ‘bilingual teacher’ may be:
- a NNS teacher, who may be in a position to use L1 in his or her teaching or not;
- a NNS teacher who is engaged in teaching a group of students who share his or her L1 via a bilingual method; or
- a teacher, either NS or NNS, who speaks more than one language. The term is virtually never used in this way in the literature, but it is in this thesis.

A ‘monolingual class’ may be:
- a group of students of mixed L1s who are taught via English-only or:
- a group of students who all share the same L1, for example Mandarin. They may be taught via English-only or via a bilingual Mandarin/English method by a teacher who speaks both Mandarin and English.

A ‘bilingual class’ is:
- a group of students who all share the same L1 for example Mandarin, who are taught via a bilingual method by a teacher who speaks both Mandarin and English.

Hence a class of Mandarin speakers may be called a ‘monolingual class’ from the perspective of linguistic homogeneity or a ‘bilingual class’ from the perspective of teaching method. A ‘monolingual teacher’ may in fact be a bilingual person. It is little wonder that discussion is confused. I shall now go on to examine how this issue is discussed in the literature.

The widespread tendency to call non-native English speaker teachers ‘bilingual teachers’ (O’Grady 1987, Masters 1993, Yip and Nguyen 1985, Forman 1994, Kershaw 1996) is often a conscious decision by the writers who have done the most to promote recognition of the extra skills these teachers have. As Kershaw puts it:

…we should cease to use the negative term non-native speaker and perhaps use bilingual teacher instead. This is not to downgrade those whose mother tongue is English… Rather it is to emphasise the advantage enjoyed by those whom we currently call non-native speaker teachers: [and that is] recourse to the common language (and culture) of the student. (Kershaw 1996:8).
The intentions are thus admirable: to stress the added language and cultural skills of the non-native (bilingual) teacher rather than stressing the deficit of being a non-native teacher. However in addressing one problem of nomenclature these authors create another, by making the term ‘bilingual’ unavailable for describing native-speaker teachers who are bilingual. Kershaw (1996), like Medgyes (1994, 1999), is also referring to a context where the students all share the same L1, which is clearly not the case in most Australian ESL classes. Further, in a process well-recognised by linguists to be a result of euphemisation, it appears that, at least in the Australian ESL context, the stigma attaching to ‘non-native speaker teacher’ has transferred itself to the term ‘bilingual teacher’. It is acknowledged by many authors that ‘bilingual’ (meaning NNS) teachers are accorded low status in the profession (Hopkins 1988, Baynham 1983, Yip and Nguyen 1985, Masters 1993, O’Grady and Wajs 1987, Piasecka 1986, Chau 1991). In a wider context, the same process seems to be at work in bilingual education in the United States, in that ‘bilingualism’ has come to mean ‘deficiency in English’ and that ‘bilingual education’ has come to mean English monolingualism (Ruiz 1994, Snow and Hakuta 1992).

O’Grady and Wajs (1987) described a situation in NSW where many bilingual (NNS) teachers had lost interest in teaching bilingual classes. They claim that the bilingual (NNS) teachers they spoke to feared being restricted to low-level classes, felt a stigma at being known as ‘bilingual teachers’ and felt valued only for their second language skills rather than for their teaching ability, as Tung (1993) and Tejos (1986) also found. Further, they found that their position as ‘bilingual teacher’ led to an increase in their workload as students sharing their L1 were encouraged to seek them out for counselling and solving of work and health problems (O’Grady and Wajs 1987).

Since the late 1970s Bilingual Information Officers (BIOs) have been employed in NSW AMES to assist students and teachers (Bagshaw 1985, Yip 1983) in the provision of educational and cultural information in their own language. Since the BIOs were not given teaching duties and were under the guidance of the (monolingual native-speaker) teacher, it is perhaps not surprising that the negative image of bilingual staff has persisted. This is despite the fact that the Review Committee of the AMEP found that the BIOs were “…a well-qualified group with most holding degrees from overseas ranging from Bachelor (31%) to PhD (2%). These degrees are most frequently (44%) in
Education and incorporate, or are accompanied by, teaching qualifications”. (Campbell 1986:92)

In other words, as a group of people in the mid-1980s, the BIOs were probably as well qualified as many of the native-speaker teachers whom they were employed to assist. Until the proliferation of TESOL training courses began in the late 1980s, few ESL teachers had qualifications beyond a teaching degree and native speaker status (Gray 2000).

Another factor contributing to the poor status of non-native teachers is that there is a history of their being employed as ‘teaching assistants’ or BIOs, rather than as teachers. A recent program was conducted in the centre mentioned in Chapter 2 which has a strong commitment to the provision of bilingual instruction. This program was called the Bilingual Assistants Pilot Program and it provided 39 bilingual teaching assistants in a total of 14 languages (Chau 2001). The assistants recruited for this program were either postgraduate students of TESOL or overseas-trained teachers, and they were paid an allowance of $12 per hour (Chau 2001). While admittedly budget constraints have severely curtailed bilingual provision, as discussed in Chapter 2, the employment of bilinguals as ‘assistants’ at a quarter of the casual hourly teaching rate will not lead to enhanced perceptions of the possible roles of bilingual teachers who are qualified both in language and in teaching. Chau herself points out that Public Service workers receive pay increments for fluency in another language, whereas ESL teachers do not (Chau 2000).

There is an assumption throughout the literature that the prototypical ESL teacher is a monolingual native speaker, and even writers who are proposing wider use of bilingual teaching methods, and a greater presence in the classroom of the learners’ L1, appear to accept that monolingual teachers are the norm. Cook refers to the common assumption in linguistics that “the native-speaker” speaks only one language, tracing it to the theoretical work of Chomsky and Saussure (Cook 1999:187). Writing of ESL in Britain, Collingham states that “[a]t present most ESL teachers are monolingual and white, and most learners are bilingual and black…” (Collingham 1988:85). She goes on to outline various teaching strategies that can be used by both “bilingual and monolingual teachers”, and suggests without irony that “teachers will find that it is helpful if they try to learn something of their learners’ languages” (Collingham 1988:85). Spiegel quotes
an ESL colleague as questioning the need for bilingual ESL teachers, since “….after all there are lots of bright, trained experienced teachers who, yes, are white and monolingual, but are broadminded and have very sympathetic attitudes to the students…” (Spiegel 1988:188). In doing so Spiegel attempts to point out the common disregard for the skills and attributes of bilingual teachers. Piasecka refers to contrastive tasks which can be carried out “both with a bilingual teacher and a monolingual teacher” (Piasecka 1986:30), and Hopkins reviews ways in which L1 can be “used by students, bilingual teachers and monolingual teachers” (Hopkins 1988:19).

Papaefthymiou-Lytra states that bilingual strategies may not be so easy to use in second language settings “if teachers are monolingual speakers” (Papaefthymiou-Lytra 1997:136). Other authors claim that “both bilingual and monolingual teachers can each bring a range of benefits and strengths to the ESL classroom” (Spiegel 1988:189), and Baynham asks “how do we as teachers, not necessarily bilingual, begin to tap this knowledge [which the learners have of their own L1]?” (Baynham 1983:10). All of these authors either assume that the native speaker teachers they describe are monolingual, or else accept without question that a substantial portion of the ESL teaching profession is monolingual.

Forman (1994:12) has observed a similar tendency in Australia, and writes that “…there is no expectation that ESL teachers are anything other than monolingual…”. In O’Grady and Kang’s study of views about the use of L1 in ESL teaching, they found that “… some young, well-educated learners expressed a preference for two teachers: a bilingual teacher for problem solving and explanation, a monolingual teacher [meaning, presumably, a native speaker] for pronunciation and as a motive for conversation practice” (O’Grady and Kang 1985:76). They also review a document from the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) on “…ways a monolingual teacher can utilize L1” (1985:73). O’Grady states that “[c]learly, however, most teachers will continue to work as monolinguals. Perhaps they do not have second language skills or their skills are inappropriate”(O’Grady 1987:178).

There are suggestions that monolingual teachers may sometimes feel threatened by bilingual teachers and/or bilingual teaching methods. Tejos’ survey elicited the response that to construct a register of the language skills of ESL teachers (which was contemplated in the 1980s) would be discriminatory to the monolingual teachers (Tejos 1986:33). Collingham maintains that “[m]onolingual teachers will have to be prepared
to allow the use of other languages in the ESL classroom, and not feel threatened by this as they often do at present” (Collingham 1988:85). Morrissey and Palser (1981) found evidence that monolingual ESL teachers in the Illawarra felt threatened by the deployment of bilingual teachers or assistants in the classroom, fearing that complaints would be voiced in L1 about them. It therefore seems to be the lot of bilingual teachers that they must tread carefully in order not to upset the sensibilities of ‘monolingual teachers’.

The Report of the Committee of Review of the AMEP (Campbell 1986) found a great deal of support and justification for increased use of bilingual teaching methods particularly at early levels. It reported that there were three main resource pools to alleviate the dearth of bilingual teachers (meaning teachers who could teach bilingual programs):

...persons who have maintained their native languages, but have not entered teaching;
persons who have maintained their native languages and who have entered some other branch of teaching;
persons who have qualified as teachers in their native NES countries and who are also proficient in English. (Campbell 1986:96)

This statement also acknowledges that extra training would be required by all three groups, particularly the first, thereby importantly recognising that teaching skills can be acquired more quickly than language skills. Teaching method can be learned in a year, unlike a second language. However, the Campbell Report still falls into the trap of assuming that the only source of bilingual teachers is among non-native English speakers. This may well reflect reality to some degree, but a government report which in many other respects is visionary about future possibilities might be expected to acknowledge the possibility of there being native speaker teachers who have a sufficient level of bilinguality, and/or that language graduates could be targeted, supported and recruited into the ESL profession. In other words, if bilingual teaching was recognised as being possible for native speakers too, resources could be mobilised to encourage and support language learning and to use existing skills.

If much of the literature discussed in this section dates from the 1980s and early 1990s, this is because these were the years when the issue of bilingual teaching was firmly on
the agenda in NSW in ESL. As discussed in Chapter 2, industry restructuring has led to a limiting of resources to pursue bilingual provision, and many non-native bilingual teachers were made redundant (Schulze 1999, Joyce 2002).

In this section I have attempted to show how the use of the terms ‘bilingual’ and ‘monolingual’ are often used inaccurately to denote, respectively, non-native speaker teachers and native-speaker teachers. This has had the dual effect of perpetuating the invisibility of bilingual skills among the NS teachers, and of extending the stigma which NNS teachers already labour under, to the very fact of being bilingual. Even proponents of bilingual teaching and of the recognition of teachers who know the L1 of their students are surprisingly tentative about the value of language skills, as this quote suggests:

The bottom line in the successful implementation of bilingual provision in AMES is the extent to which all of us are willing and generous enough to recognise the special skills that bilingual and bicultural teachers posses…a heightened awareness of the linguistic and cultural presuppositions their learners bring to the classroom. (O’Grady and Wajs 1987:5) (emphasis added)

My aim is not to criticise the authors, who have contributed a great deal, both theoretically and in the production of practical guidelines, to the promotion of bilingual teaching approaches and the valuing of students’ first language(s). Rather it is to show that the professional climate when this was written was such that recognition of skills which are central to the teaching of language was left up to the individual volition and generosity of mainstream (that is, monolingual) colleagues. The oddity of this can be highlighted by imagining a similar call to recognise key skills in other professions.5

In short, there is much evidence that monolingualism has been and still is perceived as the norm for ESL teachers, and that the prototypical teacher is still seen as the native speaker, despite an emerging literature which contests this. Non-native speaker teachers are constructed along deficit lines as having questionable proficiency in English, rather than as having additional language skills and learning experience which may be of value. Those authors who argue for a wider recognition of the skills of NNS teachers

5 An imaginary parallel from the field of engineering: “We must all be willing and generous enough to recognise the special skills that those who have trained in the use of pre-formed concrete floors bring to the construction of high-rise buildings”.

51
have begun calling them ‘bilingual’, but this only serves to confuse the use of terms even more, with ‘bilingual’ teacher being a euphemism for ‘non-native speaker’, and a ‘native-speaker’ teacher being understood to be a monolingual. Second language skills are, it seems, invisible and entirely unutilised for native-speakers and are a liability for non-native speakers since they condemn them to limited and undervalued roles.

3.1.9 Summary of bilingualism and second language learning

This section has considered questions of bilingualism and second language learning and has given a review of selected aspects of the literature which are pertinent to the research questions of this study. Definitions of bilinguality have been discussed, as well as differing routes to the development of bilinguality. A brief review was given of the research into the effects of age on second language development. These issues will be revisited in Chapter 5 in relation to the teachers’ varying levels of bilingual proficiency, their status as circumstantial or elective bilinguals, and the kinds of language learning experience they report. The bilingual person was discussed from the perspective of studies of individual and social identity, and a description of bilingual language use given to show how, in Grosjean’s (1985, 1999) terms, the bilingual is a unique and integrated language user, and should not be thought of as a ‘double monolingual’. Two final issues were discussed which have particular relevance to the present study because they touch on questions of bilingualism and SLA as they relate specifically to the ESL profession. These were firstly the debate surrounding the merits of native English speaker teachers versus non-native English speaker teachers, and secondly the tendency in the ESL literature to confuse ‘native-speaker’ with ‘monolingual’ and ‘bilingual’ with ‘non-native speaker’.
3.2 The value of language learning

“Language learning can result in a better understanding of one’s first language and stimulate rigorous thinking and memory. Learning another language may also broaden…linguistic perspectives…”
(The Australian Language and Literacy Policy, DEET 1991)

The focus of this thesis is the value or lack of value placed on the second language learning experience of ESL teachers. As a prelude to considering what the data shows about the value of L2 learning for the teachers, in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, it is worth examining the literature which argues that language learning in general has benefits of an intellectual, cultural and emotional nature. That literature is the focus of this section.

The learning of languages other than one’s own tends to be regarded uncritically by the public as a general good. However such a broad generalisation needs to be examined carefully to perceive how this might vary across different times, different political contexts and different philosophies about education, immigration, international affairs and other major societal concerns (Stern 1983). Language learning cannot be ascribed value or lack of value without reference to individual, educational and societal aspirations, and statements on its worth will inevitably reflect sociopolitical positions. This section will examine varying views in Australia and internationally on the place of LOTE in the education system and in society, but will take a position that for the purposes of the argument of this thesis, that the learning of second languages has many benefits. The literature discussed will be used to support this notion, but it is also worth mentioning that there exists no literature which attempts to argue that the learning of languages lacks value. Rather, any such position comes into being through public policies which neither fund nor promote language learning.

First, policy statements by governmental and professional bodies are considered. There follows a review of the literature which claims that language learning promotes intellectual development, and secondly a review of the literature claiming that it promotes the development of cultural understandings. Thirdly discussions of monolingualism as the counterpoint to language learning are reviewed, and finally all the main arguments for the promotion of language learning are summarised and linked to the subjects of this thesis: ESL teachers of adult immigrants.
3.2.1 Policy statements

A major statement from the language teaching profession was made by a joint committee of the Australian Linguistics Society and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (henceforth ALS/ALAA) in 1981 as a response to the Curriculum Development Centre’s (CDC) paper ‘Core Curriculum for Australian Schools’. The ALS/ALAA response was made to counteract the CDC’s rejection of language learning as part of a core curriculum, and sets out persuasive arguments for the opposite view. The statement is organised into educational arguments, sociopolitical arguments and personal and family arguments. Educational arguments include the development of ‘cultural awareness’ and of how culture is manifested in language, and evidence of second language speakers having improved cognitive development, more divergent thinking and greater mental flexibility. Sociopolitical arguments centre on the notion that a monolingual core curriculum would ill-equip young Australians to be part of a multicultural nation, leading to attitudes which would deride the linguistic and cultural heritages of Australia’s diverse population. The personal and family argument maintains the right of children to retain their family’s language(s). Throughout the paper, ALS/ALAA takes the CDC’s statements of desirable educational goals and systematically shows how language learning can contribute to their achievement. Ultimately, they argue, “language is the fundamental expression of culture: a multicultural society must be multilingual if the term multicultural (often used in the document) is to have any real meaning” (ALS/ALAA 1981:21).

The National Policy on Languages (NPL), (Lo Bianco 1987) is perhaps the most detailed, coherent and far-reaching such document in the Australian context. Commissioned by the Commonwealth as a result of intense lobbying from professional, migrant and community groups throughout the 1980s (Moore 1996), it has as one of its central tenets “a language other than English for all” (Lo Bianco 1987:120). The policy states that “Second language study has been advocated as intrinsically valuable…as educationally, culturally and intellectually enriching” (Lo Bianco 1987:124), and that this is true for all languages, whether community languages, indigenous languages or languages of international use, whether or not they coincide with those traditionally taught in schools. Lo Bianco proposes four main categories of benefits conferred by LOTE study, which will be discussed further in the next section:
Enrichment (cultural and intellectual);
Economic (vocations and foreign trade);
Equality (social justice and overcoming disadvantage); and
External (relating to Australia’s role in the world)

The NPL was replaced in 1991 by “Australia’s Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy” (DEET 1991), which, many commentators have pointed out, has subtly but importantly changed the focus on LOTE (Moore 1996, Lo Bianco 1999a, Clyne 1991b). The ALLP concurs with the NPL stance that the learning of LOTE should be substantially expanded and improved, stating, among other things, that language learning can lead to a better understanding of one’s first language (DEET 1991). It focussed, however, far more on the need for English literacy, framing other languages as potential hindrances to this main goal. As Moore (1996) points out, the NPL portrayed all Australians as both users and potential learners of the broad range of languages described above, while the ALLP framed all languages as ‘foreign’ and laid the groundwork for a new report, that of the Council of Australian Governments (1994), which led to an effective excision of LOTE from national language policy. In this later report, the focus was turned towards Asian languages perceived to be useful for economic, trade and diplomatic purposes consistent with Australia’s external affairs policies. From this came NALSAS, or the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools strategy, which allocated priority to four languages: Mandarin, Indonesian, Korean and Japanese. In 2002 funding for the NALSAS strategy ceased.

A Statement on Languages other than English for Australian schools was produced by the Australian Education Council in 1994, and it listed fourteen ways in which learning LOTE is of potential benefit to the development of an individual, ranging from “increase[ing] their understanding of and ability to analyse the function and structure of language” to “develop[ing] positive cross-cultural and intercultural perspectives” (AEC 1994:4).

The LOTE guidelines of the Victorian Ministry of Education current in 1994 also contained a wide range of objectives which are potentially met through the study of LOTE, such as “to contribute to the learners’ conceptual development” and “to give access to mother tongue development for those whose home language is not English” (Gibbons 1994:19).
In 2002 a Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other Than English in Schools Program was commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training, (DEST) to which the Modern Language Teachers Association of Queensland (MLTAQ) made a submission. MLTAQ referred to the well-accepted contribution of LOTEs to cognitive development and cross-cultural understanding, and pointed out that LOTE continued to be marginalised in schools as an ‘elite’ subject, as a ‘time-filler’ or an optional extra. This same point was made by MLTA NSW in 1981, suggesting that the profile of LOTEs had not substantially altered in the intervening two decades (MLTAQ 2002).

The DEST Review Report accepted the evidence submitted to it that there are many advantages in studying LOTE, including social, cultural, economic, cognitive and personal benefits. It stated that languages are essential to understanding culture, and that early language training helps students to develop insights into other societies’ cultures, belief systems and values, and through those, reflect on their own (Erebus 2002). The general thrust of the report was for increased funding and promotional support for the schools’ LOTE program, and for a new National Languages Policy or Statement, but as of August 2003 there was no substantial government response.

All of these policies and documents contain express references to the value of learning languages other than English, but the number of policy changes in less than two decades as shown by the above summary, suggests that LOTE occupies a precarious position in national priorities. Liddicoat (2002) claims that the government’s policy for languages is very weak, citing a series of reductions in the scope of Federal language policy in recent years. As both Mahnken (2003) and Liddicoat (2002) point out, LOTE is the only (school) key learning area which, unlike mathematics, science or physical education, has to repeatedly justify its existence.

There are three possible contributing factors to the low status and lack of consistent funding of LOTE in education in Australia. One is the generally poor record of large numbers of English-speaking Australians in learning a language with any success (DEET 1992), which may lead to a public perception that languages are difficult to acquire, particularly for English-speaking Australians, and are ultimately not really necessary. A statement by the Australian Linguistics Society in a submission to the then
Prime Minister reveals this attitude: “[i]t appears to be widely believed in Australia that foreign languages are essentially unlearnable to normal people, and that Australians have a special innate anti-talent for learning them”. (ALS/ALAA 1981:15)

Grassby made the same point even more graphically a few years earlier: “...the view that the Australian born ... suffers a mutation of the genes so he [sic] can never adequately learn a second language...for an Australian to have a second language is some kind of treason…” (Grassby 1977:2).

Baldauf (1993) points out that many Anglo-Celtic Australians do not see why they or their children should learn a second language, while DjitÈ (1994) attests to a similar disregard for LOTE among business people. The DEST Report reveals that in 2002, only slightly more than 10% of students were studying a LOTE in Year 12 (Erebus 2002:12)

A second possible contributing factor is community attitudes to other languages in the public sphere, where they are sometimes seen as ‘foreign’ and threatening. Baldauf (1993) traces changing community attitudes. Pre-1970s, he argues, studying a LOTE was an elite, high-status pursuit fairly well removed from ordinary people, whereas in the 1970s migrant lobbyists made demands for the recognition of their ‘community languages’ (Clyne 1991a) which resulted in their being seen as low-status and symbolic of disadvantages and limited life chances. While the xenophobia of the White Australia Policy and the general distrust of immigrants’ languages and cultures (Ozolins 1993) gave way to multicultural policies of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, it can be argued that the post-2001 perceived threats to national and international security have led to a renewed suspicion of difference in language and culture.

Thirdly, some would argue that since English is now recognised virtually unchallenged as the dominant global language (Crystal 1997a), it has become even less necessary for English speakers to learn any other. Crystal himself refers to “clear signs of linguistic complacency” among English-speakers and a “genuine, widespread lack of motivation” which might well be linked to the spread of English as a global language (Crystal 1997a:15). Edwards (1994) states that while English and American monolinguals complain they have no aptitude for foreign languages (see above), they display a self-satisfied belief that everyone else will have to learn English:
[this complaint] … is usually accompanied by expressions of envy for those multilingual Europeans, and (sometimes) by a linguistic smugness reflecting a deeply-held conviction that, after all, those clever ‘others’ who do not already know English will have to accommodate in a world made increasingly safe for anglophones. (Edwards 1994:60)

Kirkpatrick, arguing for the importance of educating multilingual and multicultural university graduates, claims that we must counter the tired but common and “comfortably persuasive” argument that the world speaks English (Kirkpatrick 2000:6). The same point is made by Smolicz (1995) and Peel (2001).

In view of the above three factors which we suggest may contribute to the poor status of LOTE in Australia, it is worth considering in more detail the arguments which have been put forward for the importance of language learning. Included here in the definition of LOTE are all the categories of language identified in the NPL (Lo Bianco 1987): community languages, indigenous languages and languages suitable for wider teaching. Since the choice of languages to be included in education systems is always dependent on funding issues and sociopolitical contestation, most of the argument centres on the ‘traditional’ European and Asian LOTE which are or have been taught in schools, with less emphasis on languages spoken within the community, and almost none on Aboriginal languages. Although some Aboriginal languages are taught as school subjects at a few sites in the Northern Territory (and a major program of bilingual education was in existence there until it was abolished in 1999), awareness of and contact with indigenous languages is extremely low among the non-indigenous population.

The abovementioned four categories of benefits conferred by LOTE study which were proposed by Lo Bianco (1987) are wide-ranging and comprehensive, comprising individual enrichment, economic benefits, social equity benefits and trade and foreign affairs benefits. Lo Bianco’s categories are not used in the following discussion, however, since the focus of this thesis is on the possible contribution of LOTE to teachers individually and professionally. The emphasis here is thus on individual benefits, but some mention is made of the other three categories. Individual benefits of learning LOTE are usually framed as intellectual, cultural and economic. The economic
arguments have little relevance here, but discussion of intellectual and cultural benefits follows in the next section.

This discussion of Australian LOTE policy shows a clear recognition that language learning has a valuable contribution to make to the country’s ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1977c), but that educational policymakers have had ambiguous and varied attitudes to the amount and nature of language learning which should be supported. This section provides a general backdrop to the society in which many of the teachers in this study have learned and taught language, and lays the foundation for the following consideration of claims for specific benefits of language learning.

### 3.2.2 Intellectual benefits of language learning

Traditionally, the study of LOTE has been justified educationally by the supposed benefits which the rigorous, sustained learning of classical or modern European languages would have on the development of disciplined, logical thinking and of problem-solving abilities. It was also claimed that the process of contrasting languages (as was common, for example in a grammar-translation approach (Stern 1992)) would provide heightened linguistic awareness (Lo Bianco 1997). (Recent thinking on linguistic awareness is discussed below.) Until a few decades ago, it was commonly thought that only European or classical languages (ie languages of high status) could provide this intellectual discipline, which van Abbe (1960) claimed arose from their formal grammar. According to this view, Asian languages are too differently structured, and some, such as Indonesian, feature too little grammar (sic) to provide the requisite intellectual value (van Abbe 1960, cited in Ozolins 1993:64).

This view may well still be held in some quarters, but it is no longer defensible in the face of current thinking about language and learning. Lo Bianco (1987) acknowledged in the National Languages Policy that second language study has long been advocated as intrinsically valuable, but was at pains to point out that this is true for all languages. All languages are complex in linguistic, cultural and sociopragmatic ways (Crystal 1987, Walsh 1993, Ferguson 1977) and therefore present equivalent, if diverse, challenges to the learner.
It is commonplace for authors to acknowledge in very general terms that language learning has cognitive benefits, suggesting that this is so well-accepted that it needs little elaboration (Kirkpatrick 2000, Lo Bianco 1987, Carr 1999). Discussion of the issue, however, must go beyond the level of assertion, and some of the most common arguments follow.

Language study is credited with assisting cognitive processes as it constitutes an “intellectual stimulus” and includes “new ways of thinking and learning and organising knowledge” (ALS/ALAA 1981:24). It “enhances [learners’] conceptual development by introducing them to other ways of thinking and communicating” (AEC 1994:4-5). Gibbons contends that language learning can “…help learners to understand that there are alternative ways of conceiving and labelling the physical universe.” (Gibbons 1994:3).

Evidence from Canadian and other research in bilingual education suggests that bilingual children show greater cognitive flexibility and creativity in problem-solving (Lambert and Tucker 1972, Bain and Yu 1978). In addition, language learning can improve learning in other academic subjects, claims Baldauf, providing an “analytical and communicative skill that enhances learning in other fields” (Baldauf 1993:125), a claim not incommensurate with long-standing traditional views mentioned above. Smolicz (1995) takes a similar line, saying that LOTE study can develop cognitive, social and learning skills which can be used in other subjects and contexts, citing a statement from the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (1990).

The concept of extending content knowledge beyond the actual language content recurs frequently. Language learning is said to give deeper knowledge of the structures and processes of communication (Baldauf 1993), “provide access to different bodies of knowledge which are unavailable to the monolingual speaker” (Byram 1999:93) and give “access to a wider range of ideas in a greater variety of areas” (ALS/ALAA 1981:24).

Another important thread in the literature which looks at intellectual aspects of language learning is the potential for extending learners’ knowledge of and understanding of languages in general and their first language in particular (Baldauf 1993). The AEC advocated LOTE study as having the side-effect of “extend[ing] [students’] awareness, knowledge and understanding of standard Australian English” and increasing their
“ability to analyse the function and structure of language” (AEC 1994:5). Gibbons concurs that LOTE study can “enhance understanding of how languages work…[and] act as a mirror to one’s own language and culture…” (Gibbons 1994:3).

An important caveat to the claims of the authors and bodies cited above needs to be made. Most authors concede that language study has only the potential to cause all these developments, and Liddicoat (2002) states that language learning does not inevitably do anything. Dewaele et al. (2003:1) make the important qualification that bilingualism (within which, as discussed in an earlier section, we can include learning a second language to a high level) can confer intellectual, psychological, social and cultural benefits “given the right conditions” (emphasis in the original). So, too, does Jessner emphasise that bilingualism can be cognitively advantageous “under certain circumstances” (Jessner 1999:201-202). These authors do not elaborate in these instances, having other concerns, but from what we know about bilingualism and second language learning we can suppose what these conditions and circumstances might be. In the case of bilingualism, a supportive home and school environment, and continuing linguistic and conceptual development in L1 are crucial (Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa 1976, Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, Grosjean 1982, Cummins and Swain 1986, Hamers and Blanc 2000, Baker 2001). In formal second language learning, the needs are for sound teaching, appropriate and relevant materials, continuity, and explicit teaching of linguistic and cultural features of language, or focus on form and function (Ellis 1994, Nunan 1995a, 1999, Hawkins 1999). In the absence of all or some of these features, language learning may deliver on few or none of its claimed virtues.

Liddicoat et al. (1997) provide a more detailed analysis of the benefits of language learning than any cited above, and it is worth considering in some detail the aspects of their analysis which bear on intellectual development. They make a distinction between the substance, the process and the outcomes of language learning. Regarding the substance, they call on Kramsch’s (1996) notion to argue that, far from being a basic process of memorizing lexis and grammar rules, second language learning necessitates going through a process of stages of ‘metaphorization’ in order to understand culturally contexted language use, and that this process occurs in understanding even linguistically simple texts. In speaking, the learner is forced to draw on a limited linguistic repertoire to express complex messages, and he or she is thereby forced into a greater awareness of
the act of communication by the removal of its automaticity. Experience of both of these factors, the authors argue, is intellectually stretching.

The *process* of language learning involves analysing the links between text and context, and provides a balance between inductive and deductive learning, being a matter of hypothesis-forming and hypothesis-testing (Corder 1981). The *outcomes* of language learning, apart from the most apparent ones of ability to speak the language concerned and the vocational opportunities that offers, include “a set of transferable skills in terms of analysis and synthesis of information in contexts of communication” (Liddicoat et al. 1997:27)

Their discussion of the educational benefits of language learning is more detailed and exhaustive than many similar arguments, which sometimes confine themselves to mere statements that language learning confers intellectual development. In contrast, Liddicoat et al. show persuasively that language learning calls on and develops a range of cognitive and metacognitive abilities which are both internal and internal/external; the latter involving communicating with others with varied linguistic repertoires. They point out that language learning is a complex intellectual task from the beginning and call on research in educational psychology and second language acquisition as well as theories of communication to justify their claims.

One further aspect of the intellectual contribution of language learning is considered in this section, and that is language awareness.

### 3.2.3 Language awareness

Language awareness is widely recognised as an important dimension of the ESL teacher’s professional knowledge (Thornbury 1997, Wright and Bolitho, 1993, 1997), and this section reviews literature which claims that language learning assists the development of such awareness. Language awareness is considered under its own heading here, because, while it is undoubtedly included in many of the definitions of improved cognitive functioning mentioned above, the topic has its own literature outside LOTE and second language acquisition professional groups. This literature
tends to take a broad view of language education, including mother tongue teaching and language across the curriculum as well as second language learning.

A key definition of language awareness is that given by Donmall (1985:7) in his Report of the (UK) National Council for Language in Education, which is: “Language awareness is a person’s sensitivity to and conscious awareness of language and its role in human life”.

Hawkins, a key researcher in language awareness, proposed a ‘trivium’ of language studies for the school curriculum (Hawkins 1984) which consists of mother tongue (MT) study, foreign language (FL) study and language awareness work. In this model, learners are assisted to develop language awareness tools such as ‘noticing’ and linguistic intuitions, and to apply them both to their mother tongue and to the language they are learning. James (1999), working with the same model as Hawkins, claims that:

One’s understanding of the workings of the FL can be illuminated by MT study, by transferring one’s MT metacognitions to the task of FL learning. Seeing MT and FL ‘objectively’, first in terms of their immanent systematicity, and then each in terms of the other, is to develop one’s linguistic metacognitions of each (James 1999:142).

There is evidence, too, that bilinguals possess greater language awareness than monolinguals, most notably in the work of Ben-Zeev (1977) who summarised her findings on their increased awareness as follows:

a) a bilingual indulges in language analysis, or practices a form of ‘incipient contrastive analysis’ (Lambert and Tucker 1972)

b) bilinguals work hard to keep their two languages separate by maximising their perception of the structural difference between them and keeping a lookout for contrastivity

c) bilinguals are more sensitive to linguistic feedback than monolinguals and therefore more open to correction. They thereby exercise metalinguistic and metacognitive skills to a greater extent than monolinguals.

In discussing this latter tendency, (c), James (1999) makes a link to Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis, one aspect of which is that the learner notices a discrepancy between the input and his or her output and this results in learning.
Hawkins (1999:134) offers three ways in which foreign language study contributes to ‘awareness of language’. Firstly, it provides feedback on the mother tongue and the culture it expresses, secondly it encourages the learner to pay close attention to words and their meanings, and thirdly it encourages the ‘mathetic’ function of language, or using language to learn about the world (Halliday 1975).

All these ways in which it has been claimed that language learning can contribute to greater language awareness are clearly relevant to ESL teachers, since, as shown in Chapter 2, language awareness is part of ESL teacher competence, and, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.5, language awareness forms part of desirable teacher professional knowledge.

### 3.2.4 Cultural benefits of language learning

ESL teachers have a responsibility to teach about the culture of the target language, as is stated in the competencies reviewed in Chapter 2. Language learning is often claimed to have the benefit of broadening cultural horizons, and this is clearly of relevance to teachers who are charged with teaching elements of culture themselves. This section will consider in what ways language learning has been credited with conferring greater cultural understanding.

‘Culture’ is one of the most complex words in the English language, mainly because it is used to express different concepts in a range of disciplines (Williams 1983). What most concerns us here are ways of discussing culture which are most relevant to language and language learning. An early such definition is that of linguist Sapir: “…language does not exist apart from culture, that is, the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives” (Sapir 1978:207). Sapir’s definition, while broad, does suggest by “assemblage” that culture is a static phenomenon, a view which now has little currency. More recent definitions emphasise the fluid, situated and negotiated nature of ‘culture’, meaning that it will manifest differently in different social and interpersonal contexts and different times. As Morrissey puts it: “‘Culture’ is not an item of baggage but a continuous process of renegotiation grounded in specific times and places and affected by other social
processes” (Morrissey 1997:102). Carr (1999:105) defines culture as “the systematic and collective making of meaning” and argues that language has a central role in the making of meaning, as does Halliday (1975), who contended that learning one’s first language is learning how to mean.

Lo Bianco (1999b) draws on Jayasuriya’s (1990) model of culture as being a configuration of archaic, residual and emergent cultures. This model brings into focus the time dimension of culture stressing that it includes imprints from previous eras (archaic), present patterns of thought and behaviour (residual) and changing, contested, emerging forms of values and practices (emergent). Language is inextricably linked with culture (Lo Bianco 1987) and language use cannot be disassociated from the creation and transmission of culture (Kramsch 1993).

Australia has described itself as ‘multicultural’ since the early 1970s (Clyne 1991c). While it is a contested term, it is usually understood to mean that we are a nation which includes immigrants and indigenous inhabitants who represent many different cultures, and that there is acceptance of, and some institutional support for, the maintenance of this diversity. Cross-cultural communication, then, is an important feature of intranational education, politics and business, as well as of international contacts. Crozet et al. (1999) ask whether it is possible to have multiculturalism without multilingualism, and argue that while being monolingual does not preclude appreciating cultural diversity, “…it does however, greatly limit the entry the person has to the other culture’s norms, views of itself and that space where it itself is natural and normal” (Crozet et al. 1999:2). Cultural diversity becomes then a kind of spectacle whereby only colourful surface forms such as food, dance and clothing are visible and available to be ‘appreciated’ by members of a dominant majority culture. Morrissey (1997) alludes to the tendency of English-speaking Australians to regard themselves as having no ethnicity. Ethnicity, or culture, is the province of the ‘other’, and a dominant group tends to regard its own culture as an unproblematic baseline to which others may be compared. It is the normalisation of one’s own culture which appears to be the enemy of successful cross-cultural communication, and many of the statements about the value of learning languages emphasise the perspective it gives on one’s own culture. Learning how a different set of social meanings are created and sustained through language can lead to a realization that one’s own habits, values and mores are arbitrary and relative rather than being the norm in opposition to the ‘otherness’ of all others.
How then does culture relate to language learning and teaching? It has been said that all teachers of language are teachers of culture, and Fitzgerald (1999) points out that students are learning cultural practices from the very first day of a language course, whether or not these are explicitly pointed out by the teacher. McMeniman and Evans (1997) outline how culture has been included in major trends in language teaching methods: the civilisation approach, or culture as a formal body of classical knowledge as represented in literature, the audio-visual approach, which assumed cultural understanding would be revealed once linguistic competence was achieved, the communicative approach, which focussed on culture as pragmatics, and the intercultural approach, where language is treated as a semiological system. Crozet et al. (1999) take a slightly different tack, describing how culture has been taught with reference to the particular view of culture involved. Their traditional approach is very similar to the civilisation of McMeniman and Evans (1997), but they then distinguish the culture studies approach, which emphasises area studies, the culture as practices approach which derives from anthropology, and lastly, an emerging paradigm, intercultural language teaching, which will be discussed below.

Let us now consider some of the statements which have been made about the contribution of language learning to a broader perspective on cultures. A major point made by many authors is that language learning gives us insights into the cultures of the peoples who use that language, and that any such insights developed without a knowledge of the language must inevitably be shallow. Baker and Prys-Jones (1998), for instance, argue, like Crozet et al. (1999) that participating in the core of a culture requires a knowledge of the language. With each language go “…ways of understanding and interpreting the world, ideas and beliefs, ways of thinking and drinking, crying and loving, eating and caring, ways of joking and mourning”, and so acquiring two or more languages provides a wider cultural experience (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998:7).

Crozet et al. (1999) emphasise that the important learning which occurs through the experience of difference as articulated in language is due to the analysis of one’s own culture and the ways in which language mediates it. They maintain that culture in language only becomes visible when examined in relation to another language and culture. Byram (1999) introduces DoyÈ’s (1992) notion of ‘tertiary socialisation’ to
describe induction into other worlds with different and conflicting meanings to those previously encountered.

ALS/ALAA (1981:13) gives a powerful justification for how the study of languages contributes to an enriched understanding of the world:

Language is the deepest manifestation of culture. It facilitates the expression of universals and those features that are specific to a particular culture, i.e. its “way of looking at the world”…The very discovery that different cultures express the same reality in different ways and sometimes emphasise different aspects of reality is a significant contribution to any young child’s educational development, for this is what liberates people from ethnocentrism … German ‘Gesundheit!’, Italian ‘prego’ and Indonesian ‘selamat makan’ highlight different forms of communicative behaviour which do not have parallels in English. Only by studying a particular language in depth can a person actually experience what it is like to try and think in another way, and to project oneself into a different mode of organizing reality. (Emphasis added.)

Baldauf (1993) claims that cultural development is the second major reason why language learning is important (after intellectual development). He states that when taught in a cultural and social context, languages widen the mind’s horizons, and help us to look outwards to the world as well as inwards to our own society. Further, he argues that language learning is indispensable to understanding diversity in an immigrant nation such as Australia. Passmore (1985) calls this ability to go beyond one’s own experience and to see how others conceptualise the world ‘sympathetic imagination’.

Several authors stress that language learning also leads to the development of different perspectives on one’s own culture. Our native culture “naturalises the world” (Crozet and Liddicoat 1999:117), and, as Lo Bianco (1987) points out, through successful learning of a second language one can reflect on one’s own culture in a more objective way, perceiving differences and commonalities. Understanding the cultural basis for behavioural differences can set up a mirror to one’s own language and culture (Gibbons 1994). Learning a second language can assist in learning about one’s own culture, and lead to recognising one’s own cultural conditioning (Liddicoat et al. 1997). This ability
to contrast cultures in terms of shared meanings, values and practices is also emphasised as a key outcome of language learning by Byram and Fleming (1998) and Byram and Risager (1999). The latter argue that competence in a foreign language is different from that of a native speaker’s because it involves the ability to see the relationships between the learner’s and the native speaker’s languages and cultures.

Crozet et al. (1999) and Crozet and Liddicoat (1997, 1999) argue for an intercultural approach to language education which takes a dynamic rather than a static view of culture, as discussed above, and propose that our aim should be to educate speakers who are truly able to interact across cultures. This does not mean adopting the position of the interlocutor (even if this were possible), nor does it mean demanding that the other adapt to our own (supposed) central and neutral position. Instead it means finding an intermediate ‘Third Place’ (Lo Bianco et al. 1999), wherein both interactants negotiate difference: “…a point of interaction, hybridity and exploration…not accommodation…but an encounter” (Crozet et al. 1999:5).

Byram (1995) defines an interculturally competent person as someone who can use their linguistic and sociolinguistic awareness to manage interactions across cultural borders. According to him, such competence involves negotiating misunderstandings caused by the way meanings are encoded, and engaging with difference.

There is a danger of assuming that language learning will automatically lead to various desired outcomes (Liddicoat 2002, Dewaele et al. 2003), and this is true too of the supposed increased cultural understanding. As Byram and Risager (1999) point out, the term ‘cultural awareness’ has been used for many things over the past decade, and can include knowledge of other countries, positive attitudes to speakers of other languages, and heightened awareness of difference of all kinds. None are an inevitable result of language learning, and McMeniman and Evans (1997) offer evidence that formal second language learning has very little relationship with the lessening of insular attitudes. As was discussed in the section on intellectual benefits of second language learning, explicit teaching, in the form of highlighting, contrasting and comparing seems to be necessary, as does reflection on the learner’s part. In referring to the “de-parochialising effect of foreign language instruction” Lambert cautions that language learning does not necessarily lead to intercultural competence (Lambert 1999:68). Rather, as discussed in
the section on intellectual benefits, language learning has the potential to assist development of an ethnonrelative view of culture. However views clearly differ on this point. While Lambert (1999) makes the point that empirical evidence for the mind-broadening effect of foreign language study is rather weak, Byram (1999) provides an example from a curriculum in the Arab Gulf States which suggests that the change of attitudes is a very likely result of FL study. One of the stated objectives is that the students should understand English-speaking culture, only on the condition that this does not lead them to devalue or disregard their own Arab/Islamic culture. In the acknowledgment of the implicit threat to the students’ home culture, we see the assumption that language learning does indeed have the potential to change views and to cause the learner to see his or her own culture in a different light.

Most of the writers cited so far speak from the perspective of teaching intercultural competence in ‘foreign’ language teaching to a (presumably) linguistically homogenous learner group, whereby essentially two cultures are available for comparison. (This, however, does not mean that the learners do not have access to other cultures, since as Makin (1992) points out, there is virtually no class in Australia which is not culturally diverse.) Mughan (1999), however, in calling for intercultural training for all foreign languages undergraduates, maintains that learning to communicate across cultures prepares the learner for exposure to all cultures: that is, he clearly sees intercultural competence as informed by the learning of one or more languages, but also as developing a set of generic skills in negotiating difference. He is therefore emphasising not the contrasting cultures as such, but the knowing of how to get to the ‘third place’ (Lo Bianco et al. 1999), which does not involve either party attempting to emulate the native speaker norms of the other language. Fitzgerald (1999) points out that in ESL classrooms there may be up to twenty different languages, and that the kind of explicit contrastive teaching advocated by Crozet and Liddicoat (1997) is not possible. She does however suggest attempting contrast, implying that the teacher will have at least some familiarity with at least some of the learners’ languages. This implication, or assumption of Fitzgerald’s leads us to a key question which is at the heart of a consideration of the cultural benefits of language learning within the context of this study. To what extent is a monolingual teacher able to teach students to be interculturally competent? Certainly monolingual teachers do have a great deal of exposure to cultural diversity in their classrooms, but are they able to ‘get outside’ their own language and culture in the way Hawkins (1999) describes, to see English linguaculture objectively? Or are they perhaps in more danger
than multilinguals of establishing essentialised versions of ethnic identity (Said 1993), or of teaching what French or Chinese people ‘do’ ‘believe’ or ‘say’ (Carr 1999). It is perhaps this latter point which leads to the following qualification in Lo Bianco’s statement on the cultural benefits of language learning. He states that “… successful learning of a second language can provide deep insights into other cultures...” (Lo Bianco 1987:46, emphasis added), and the ALS/ALAA (1981) statement also refers to such insights as being only available by studying a particular language in-depth. Without successful and in-depth learning of another language, we must ask whether it is possible to come to a deep appreciation of the points of commonality and difference between one’s own and another’s culture.

Barraja-Rohan (1999) appears to believe that it is not possible. Writing about intercultural language teaching in ESL, she maintains that “through becoming multilingual, a speaker is more likely to have acquired some degree of intercultural competence, whereas a monolingual speaker who has less profound exposure to cultural diversity is less likely to have acquired this competence” (Barraja-Rohan 1999:153). Byram and Risager (1999) refer to the ability of foreign language teachers to mediate between learners’ cultures and others, to teach learners themselves to mediate and to encourage learners to explore communication and understanding. It is not at all clear whether monolingual teachers of ESL in the contexts examined in this thesis would be equipped to undertake this kind of mediation between cultures.

The previous two sections have considered intellectual and cultural benefits of language learning. The next three sections will consider three other benefits: language apprenticeship, exhilaration and social equity.

3.2.5 Other benefits of language learning: “language apprenticeship”

An interest in ‘learning how to learn language’ has been evident in the ELT literature for some time, as reflected in the title of Ellis and Sinclair’s (1989) book “Learning to learn English – a course in learner training”. There has been a proliferation of texts teaching or discussing successful language learning strategies (Wenden 1987, Oxford 1990, Willing 1989, Moir and Nation 2002, Postmus 1999). An implication of this focus on how to learn language is that once these strategies have been acquired, they can be applied to the
learning of a third or subsequent language. This and other views are reviewed below.

Baker and Prys-Jones (1998:265), writing about the benefits of bilingualism, contend that being bilingual gives one confidence in learning another language. “Knowing that it is easy to operate in two languages makes it seem entirely possible to learn a third (or fourth) language.” Gibbons (1994), too, contends that a third language is easier to learn than a second, a fourth easier than a third, and so on, (although the broadness of this claim is somewhat suspect, since it takes into account neither circumstance nor language distance). Edwards (1994), too, citing examples of highly multilingual individuals, suggests that the more languages one has, the easier it is to add more. This idea, that learning a second language is the key to unlocking a kind of mental ‘door’ to further language learning, is termed ‘language apprenticeship’ by Hawkins (1999:140). He claims that foreign language learning in schools should be “an apprenticeship in learning how to learn language…this will mean far more attention to cross-language comparisons and more talk about language than has been the fashion”. In other words Hawkins is not advocating that there is necessarily a progressive easing of the task as one learns further languages, but that educational intervention of the language awareness type which he proposes should be planned to ensure that this is so. The emphasis on actively contrasting languages is mentioned too by Jessner (1999) in reporting her findings that bilinguals are better language learners than monolinguals, because they: “…reflect on their language use and usage, e.g. they compare their language systems and they develop different language learning strategies from their less experienced counterparts” (Jessner 1999:203).

An interesting empirical perspective is provided on this aspect by Postmus (1999) who compared the language learning processes of adult bilinguals with those of adult monolinguals, all of whom were learning Mandarin as a foreign language at an Australian university. She found that differences in prior linguistic experience influenced learners’ conceptions of language learning and their approaches to the language learning task, specifically their strategic use of metalinguistic thinking. Her findings are an important support for Hawkins’ (1999) notion of ‘language apprenticeship’ and for the research into third and subsequent language learning as distinct from second language acquisition (Jessner 1999, Herdina and Jessner 2002). The studies of Jessner and Postmus are also notable for the fact that they investigated
adult learners of third or subsequent languages, while the vast majority of research into metalinguistic and metacognitive benefits has taken place with children or adolescents.

3.2.6 Other benefits of language learning: exhilaration

Sometimes overlooked in claims for the benefits of language learning is the enjoyment, pleasure, and satisfaction which can accompany the process. Hawkins (1999) bemoans the fact that LOTE learning is often regarded as simply the acquisition of a useful skill, meeting individual or national needs, rather than as being an essential part of education. He takes a leap away from a utilitarian approach, claiming that enjoyment, discovery and desire are also part of language learning: “What may have been overlooked is the sheer exhilaration of the journey into a foreign language and a foreign culture for its own sake...the intrinsically rewarding nature of such a journey.” (Hawkins 1999:134, emphasis in the original).

Clyne (2003) echoes this sentiment, citing intrinsic motivation as a little-researched but powerful driver of language learning. A study by Nicholas et al., (1993) too, found that the strongest motivator of Australian LOTE teachers was their love of languages and desire to pass this love on to others.

Kramsch (1997), in her defence of the special abilities and privileges of the non-native speaker, gives an eloquent justification for second language learning, claiming that learners can:

…take intensive physical pleasure in acquiring a language, thrill in trespassing on someone else’s territory, becoming a foreigner on their own turf, becoming both invisible and differently visible…multilingual speakers create new discourse communities whose aerial existence monolingual speakers hardly suspect” (Kramsch 1997:365).

She further claims that speaking the language of others can enable one to construct new linguistic and cultural identities, between the spaces of national languages. She conjures the concept of ‘linguistic travel and migration’ and suggests that second language speakers can linger and re-invent themselves on the margins of monolinguals’ landscapes (Kramsch 1997:368).
Many language learning autobiographies evoke a strong sense of the power of second languages to transform experience and identity (Pavlenko 2001), and this is evident in that of Lvovich (1997) who talks of the “nourishment” and “passion” which her learning and speaking of French afforded her in contrast to her grim Soviet existence. She describes her “French soul” as embracing people, passions, achievements, suffering and love, and she experiences being cut off from the language as being similar to losing a friend or a lover (Lvovich 1997:71).

Such evocative, descriptive passages may strike a note of recognition among keen language learners, and Kramsch (1997) is a keen advocate of the notion that teachers have a responsibility to awaken their learners to the beauty and creative possibilities of languages. She calls for a teacher-led rediscovery of the poetic functions of language, of language play, and, at higher levels, new and stimulating approaches to translation and comparative stylistics.

Enjoyment is an intangible benefit which is not often considered in statements of desirable educational outcomes, but, as the authors discussed above show, it is a key part of language learning for many people. In the case of the teachers in this study, enjoyment of and love for languages often constituted the key reason for their becoming ESL teachers.

### 3.2.7 Other benefits of language learning: social equity

The previous sections discussed the intellectual, cultural and emotional benefits which can potentially be gained by individuals through the learning of a second language. In addition to these there are well-recognised benefits to the individual and the nation related to the usefulness of languages in overseas trade and communications and in the diplomatic service (Dewaele et al. 2003, Grin and Vaillancourt 1997, Singh and Singh 1999, Kirkpatrick 2000, Lo Bianco 1987). These are not discussed here in any detail as they have little relevance to the argument of this thesis. A further dimension, which does have some relevance to the language background of ESL teachers, is what Lo Bianco terms the ‘equality’ dimension, to do with social justice and overcoming disadvantage. The predominant linguistic manifestation of social inequality is in lack of access to or skill with English (Lo Bianco 1987), and this is the core business of
ESL teachers, whose entire profession is devoted to providing opportunities for other-language speakers to develop proficiency in English. This is relatively uncontentious. What is more contentious, however, is another aspect of the ‘social justice’ perspective, and this is the right of immigrants and speakers of indigenous languages to maintain their own languages, to pass them on to their children and to have them recognised in the education system (Clyne 2003, Baldauf 1993, Lo Bianco 1987, ALS/ALAA 1981, Gibbons 1994, Skutnabb-Kangas 1996, 2000a, 2000b). In other words, learning English should not be at the expense of one’s first language, either for children or for adults, but should be aimed at achieving additive rather than subtractive bilingualism (Lambert 1974).

Adults are in general in less danger of losing their L1 than are children, but loss is not the only danger. Recognition of the first language(s) and a certain amount of inclusion in the learning process are important for adults, since to ignore them is to implicitly devalue them and imply that they are somehow less worthy than English. Such an implication may well begin to have an effect on how immigrants perceive their language(s), how and whether they are likely to stand up for their linguistic rights in education and other areas, and how and whether they pursue language maintenance within their family. Attitudes to and practices regarding learners’ first language(s) in the ESL classroom, then, are more than a matter of pedagogical procedure: they go to the heart of what it means to teach English and to learn English. If the first language is recognised, welcomed and explored linguistically and sociolinguistically, then it can become an important building-block in the learning of ESL (Cook 2001). The whole enterprise of learning languages can be approached with celebration, as an approach to bilingualism, rather than with an attitude which suggests that L1 is an impediment to achieving skill in English. Teacher attitudes and practices regarding the role of the first language in the ESL class is the topic of Chapter 8, and so it will not be discussed further here.

3.2.8 The undesirability of monolingualism

One of the arguments of this thesis is that the ESL profession has developed, for a number of reasons, a ‘monolingual habitus’ (Gogolin 1994), one of the features of which is the unquestioning acceptance of monolinguality for ESL teachers. As a counterpoint to the discussion of the literature claiming the benefits of second language
learning, this section will discuss the work of authors who explicitly examine the opposite: the state of monolingualism. This will be examined here mainly from a perspective of individual monolingualism, whereas monolingualism as a societal phenomenon will be referred to in the final chapter, Chapter 9. The perspectives on monolingualism which will be examined here are those which relate to its perceived status as the norm, those which see it as limiting and disadvantageous to individuals, and those which see it as pathological and dangerous.

There are more bi/multilinguals in the world than monolinguals (Baker and Pryse Jones 1998, Hamers and Blanc 2000, Crystal 1987, Dewaele et al. 2003) and yet, as Romaine (1995) points out, in her introduction to the book ‘Bilingualism’, it would be strange to find a book with the title ‘monolingualism’. One explanation for this is that linguistic theories have traditionally assumed monolingualism to be the unmarked case (Pavlenko 2000, Romaine 1995) and this is often also the view of monolinguals themselves who are speakers of a ‘powerful’ language of wider communication such as English (Edwards 1994). Christ (1997) maintains that populations of developed countries whose language is a language of international communication “live with the impression that their own language is the normal case which speakers of other languages must adjust to” (Christ 1997:221).

Monolingualism is represented in two main ways by the authors reviewed here. The first representation is of monolingualism as a limitation on cognitive, communicative, social and vocational potential. This view sees the ability to speak only one language as a disadvantage, even though the individuals themselves may not see it this way. As they tend to be part of the dominant language mainstream, they do not necessarily perceive monolingualism as a deficit, but rather see bilingualism as the exception. The second representation also sees monolingualism as a limitation, but in a far more critical way: it views it as a pathological state, and uses metaphors of disease, of sickness and of disability.

Those who speak only one language are disadvantaged in the global job market and in business (Kirkpatrick 2000, Mughan 1999, Peel 2001, DjitÈ 1993). Crozet et al (1999) doubt the ability of monolingual speakers to become truly interculturally competent,
since they lack access to other cultures’ norms and world view as represented through language. Peel (2001:14) laments the narrowness of perspective of monolingual English-speakers in an increasingly multilingual world, arguing that if they do not understand how languages work and how they differ, they will never understand other peoples beyond a superficial level. He calls a monoglot world “a world of terrifying blandness” stripped of the subtlety and negotiation involved in multilingual communication. This limitation is pointed out by Liddicoat (2002) too, who maintains that while English is a useful part of a person’s repertoire, English alone is not enough. Snow and Hakuta (1992) argue that the English-speaking tendency to view monolingualism as the norm has both individual and societal costs. Monolingual children miss out on the opportunity to develop an early appreciation of language, and the cognitive and linguistic flexibility referred to in the bilingualism literature (Chapter 3.1).

Of those who view monolingualism as a pathological state, Skutnabb-Kangas (1996, 2000a, 2000b) gives the most detailed justification for such a view. She lists four common myths: that monolingualism is normal, desirable, sufficient for communication, and inevitable at both a societal and individual level. She outlines the arguments for each of these and then proceeds to refute each in turn (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a, 2000b). She argues that monolingualism at a societal level is a social construction which has been used to marginalise various groups of people, and that at an individual level it is the result of misguided educational policies and linguicism. In other words, the monolingual individual is so because he or she has suffered from lack of opportunity to learn (or maintain) a second language through discriminatory policies and practices. Ultimately, she maintains: “Like cholera or leprosy, monolingualism is an illness which should be eradicated as soon as possible” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a:185). While Skutnabb-Kangas is vociferous in making this point, and has been criticised for “loaded and … inflammatory language” (Handsfield, 2002:549), she is not the only one who sees monolingualism as a pathology. Oller (1997) employs the discourse of disability to suggest that monolinguals suffer from a kind of language blindness. Seeing the world only through one language or dialect means that they are unaware of how language shapes and reflects both thought and social structures. He terms this condition “monoglottosis” and calls it:
…a general unawareness of the languages or dialects that must be called upon to make sense of the surface-forms of speech or other signs that enable communities to share abstract meanings … Monoglotrosis is a special blindness towards the general dependence of all sign-users on such conventions in some particular language/dialect (Oller 1997:469).

Oller has a particular purpose in making this observation, which is referred to below in examining what authors say are the effects of monolingual perspectives, but regardless of his purpose, his statements about monolinguals are intended to have broad applicability. Other terms used to frame monolingualism as a sickness or a dysfunction are ‘monolingual myopia’ (Smolicz 1995), ‘monolingual reductionism’, ‘monolingual stupidity’ and ‘monolingual naÔvety’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a). Handsfield’s (2002) critique of Skutnabb-Kangas’ work includes the charge that she criticises monolinguals as abnormal and intellectually and morally deficient.

A further and key dimension of arguments maintaining the paucity of the monolingual experience is that which critiques the effects produced by a monolingual perspective. Clyne (1991c) remarks, for example, that multilingualism has been largely overlooked by the majority of writers on Australian multiculturalism, simply because most of the authors are monolingual. They simply do not see, or perceive the relevance of, the many-language abilities of sections of the population. So too Crozet et al (1999) argue that multiculturalism viewed from a monolingual perspective can only result in a shallow, voyeuristic and ‘othering’ view of culture. ALS/ALAA (1981:14) describe cultural awareness programs which do not include a second language as “an illusion of monolinguals”. Their statement rejects the notion of a monolingual school curriculum on the grounds that it disadvantages Australian students compared to their overseas counterparts, and that it is all too compatible with attitudes which denigrate other languages. Snow and Hakuta (1992) found that one effect of monolingual educational policies is that minority children lose their first language, which could have been maintained at much less social and educational cost than teaching new languages from scratch. Another effect of monolingual perspectives is that bilingual transition classes act as a “revolving door” between monolingualism in L1 and the ‘achievement’ of monolingualism in L2 (Snow and Hakuta 1992:390).
Skutnabb-Kangas (2000b) and Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) level the charge of ‘linguistic genocide’ against the monolingual elites who make language and educational policy. In this case, she argues that monolingualism leads to an inability to see the value of language survival, and causes children to grow up believing that to succeed it is necessary to choose between their languages. Oller’s (1997) critique of “monoglottosis” (above) arises from his attempt to counter the prevailing view that IQ tests are free of language bias and to show that they do indeed have cultural bias expressed through language. In his view, the result of ‘monolingual blindness’ on the part of the test-makers and test administrators has been to wrongly ‘diagnose’ bilingual and minority children as ‘learning deficient’, ‘retarded’ or ‘semi-lingual’ (Oller 1997).

ValdÈs and Figueroa (1994) argue a similar case, conducting a careful and systematic review of the assumptions and logic behind educational testing and concluding that these are informed by the view that monolingual language proficiency is the norm, and that bilinguals can be tested using the same approaches and instruments. These authors suggest that since those who make language and educational policy in developed countries and often for developing countries (in the case of international aid projects) are usually monolingual, they are in a powerful position to enforce a monolingual viewpoint. This argument is developed further in Chapter 3.4: Critical approaches to TESOL.

A last point to make is that while all the above authors write about monolingualism in the general population and among policy-makers, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000a) turns her attention to ESL teachers.

To me, monolingual ESL teachers are per definition [sic] incompetent to teach ESL: they simply lack several of the capacities or proficiencies that a learner needs and can reasonably expect from the teacher…a starting point for all ESL teachers is to eradicate monolingualism among themselves. (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a:37-39)

Although part of her argument is flawed since she immediately equates bi/multilingual ESL teachers with non-native speakers, and assumes that most native-speaker teachers are monolingual, (a tendency discussed in Chapter 3.1), she makes two points which are highly relevant to the argument of this thesis. Firstly, ESL teachers need to have detailed awareness of how the mother tongue and the second language differ (and this is, of course, problematic in mixed-language classes, no matter how multilingual the teacher),
and secondly, that teachers need to have “first-hand experience of having learned and using a second or a foreign language…. [a] bilingual or multilingual native speaker is thus better able to understand what the learners experience than a monolingual one” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000a:38). It is precisely this issue on which this study attempts to throw some light.

3.2.9 Summary of the value of language learning and the implications for ESL teachers

There follows a summary of the main points of Chapter 3.2 and a discussion of how they relate to the language background of adult ESL teachers as the focus of the present study. Policy documents and statements examined from the years 1981-2002 all state that language learning has many benefits. These benefits are individual (intellectual, cultural and vocational), intra-societal (equal opportunity, social justice, family language maintenance) and inter-societal (global trade, economics and foreign affairs). The main focus here has been on individual advantages derived from language learning of an intellectual and cultural nature, as being the most relevant to the work of ESL teachers.

The intellectual value of language learning includes the development of alternative ways of conceiving of and describing the universe (Gibbons 1994), and of a deeper understanding of the processes of communication (Baldauf 1993), and involves processes of ‘metaphorization’ (Kramsch 1996) and ‘hypothesis forming and testing’ (Corder 1981). Speakers of second languages develop skills in analysing and synthesising knowledge in order to communicate in contexts of limited linguistic resources and imperfectly grasped cultural concepts (Liddicoat et al. 1997). Since in the process of teaching ESL to speakers of other languages, teachers are assisting learners to undertake all these processes, it would seem advantageous for the teachers to have experienced them through their own language learning. Teachers of ESL are expected to be skilled analysts of English (Edge 1988), and have in-depth knowledge of the underlying systems of language and an ability to explain them (Thornbury 1997). Language awareness is a pre-cursor to an ability to language analysis for teaching purposes, and there is evidence that language awareness training activities which involve reflecting on and contrasting the mother tongue and a second language lead to a great understanding of how language and languages work in different and similar ways
Contrasting languages has been shown to be a feature of bilingual language use (Ben-Zeev 1977) and it is likely that the kind of language analysis which can be done on the basis of two or more languages will be deeper and will proceed from a more informed base than that done on the basis of the mother tongue alone (Hawkins 1984). A further intellectual aspect of language learning is the apprenticeship aspect: that through learning one language, one learns important cognitive, metacognitive and communicative strategies which assist in learning further languages (Jessner 1999, Herdina and Jessner 2003, Postmus 1999, Hawkins 1999).

Since ‘learning strategies’ education is an explicit part of ESL teachers’ role, they proceed from a basis of experience if they have learned a second or third language themselves.

The value of increased cultural understanding and perspectives gained by language learning is also relevant to ESL teachers. As teachers of immigrants they deal with people from many different cultural backgrounds, and it is well-accepted that ‘cultural awareness’ is an essential criterion for the job. All the studies cited in this section suggest that such cultural awareness is impossible to achieve in any depth without language learning. A view of culture which does not include language is based on surface, visible features which can often lead to the stereotyping of people and cultural groups. ESL teachers are charged with teaching about Australian cultural practices and culture as it is manifested in language (Lo Bianco et al. 1999), and numerous authors attest that developing a more objective and relative view of one’s own culture is a major outcome of successful language learning. Teachers need to know about their learners’ linguacultures too, and this knowledge is likely to be superficial if approached from a monolingual perspective. ESL teachers are, ideally, supposed to be teaching their learners to be ‘interculturally competent and to meet interlocutors in the ‘third place’ (Kramsch 1993, Crozet et al 1999, Liddicoat et al. 1997), and we need to ask if this is possible on the basis of knowing only one language. Learners, too, stand to benefit from the intellectual and cultural ‘stretching’ afforded by learning English as a second language, but this will only come about if they are assisted in developing increased insights by teachers who are able to highlight, compare and contrast languages (Liddicoat 2002, Hawkins 1999). Teachers who have not learned other languages cannot effectively contrast English with anything, nor can they ‘get outside’ English to view it more objectively in highlighting its patterns (Hawkins 1984).
The authors who write about monolingualism see it as a limitation, a disadvantage or a lost opportunity at best, and a disease, a disability or a dysfunction at worst. The view of Skutnabb-Kangas (2000a) that monolingual ESL teachers are by definition incompetent is not the view of this author, since there are many more aspects to teacher competence than linguistic ability. However she is one of the few writers to comment specifically on the importance of ESL teachers having experience of second language learning and second language using, and as such her comment provides a powerful justification for the focus of the present research. We need much more information on the contribution which language learning makes to the skills and cognitions of ESL teachers who teach mixed-language classes. The findings of this study provide some tentative answers to this question.
3.3 The role of the first language in second language learning

Second language learners not only already possess a language system which is potentially available as a factor in the acquisition of a second language, but equally importantly they already know something of what a language is for, what its communicative functions and potentials are. (Corder 1992:24)

A theme which emerged strongly from the data in this study was the beliefs held by teachers about the role of learners’ first language in the ESL class, and hence the literature on this issue is reviewed here. The use of the learner’s L1 in second language teaching, either by the teacher or by students, has been contentious since at least the mid-twentieth century. Most if not all current theoretical stances admit that the L1 has an important role to play linguistically, psychologically and socially in second language learning. Current practice in the ESL profession however appears to be ambivalent: to acknowledge in theory the social benefits of its use and its role in the second language learning process, while effectively banning it, restricting its use or ignoring it in the ESL class. The next sections will first define the term ‘first language’ and then examine the history of method, policy and practice in this area.

3.3.1 Definition of the term ‘first language’

A person’s first language may also be referred to as the mother tongue, native language or L1, and all these terms are used here interchangeably. This does not imply, however, that they are always used to mean the same thing in other contexts. Stern (1983) points out that these terms may refer either to the language acquired first in infancy, or to a language which was acquired later but has come to be the dominant one. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:14-15) defines the first language as the language one thinks in, the language one dreams in and the language one counts in. She identifies four features: origin (the language learned first), competence (the language known best), function (the language used most) and attitude (the language one identifies with, and is identified by others as a native speaker of). The UNESCO definition is: “…the language which a person acquires in early years and which normally becomes its [sic] natural instrument of thought and communication” (UNESCO 1953:46 cited in Hamers and Blanc 2000:2). For the purposes of this chapter, all the above terms will be used to mean the language acquired first in infancy and still dominant. Where this usage does not accurately
describe an individual, any ambiguity will be clarified by distinguishing the ‘mother
tongue’ (in infancy) from the (currently) ‘dominant language’.

3.3.2 The history of method in language teaching

In considering the development of methods in the last two centuries, Stern (1992) proposes a useful division of the many methods and approaches into those which are intralingual and those which are cross-lingual. Intralingual strategies are characterised by the use of the second language (L2) as a reference system, an exclusive focus on L2 and culture 2 (C2), the separation of L2 from L1, the avoidance of translation, teaching via the medium of L2, and an emphasis on co-ordinate bilingualism. Crosslingual approaches are characterised by the use of L1 as a reference system, comparison between L1 and L2, C1 and C2, the use of grammar-based methods and a belief in the achievement of compound bilingualism. Stern maintains that: “…for many teachers, the crosslingual strategy is no longer considered a point for discussion; in theory language teaching today is entirely intralingual” (Stern 1992:279).

The distinction would still appear to be a useful way of looking at the debate, with the exception of the equating of a cross-lingual approach with the grammar-translation method, as we shall see. We shall also see that contrary to Stern’s view that the debate is no longer active, it remains alive and well.

The grammar-translation method is the first I shall consider in this brief review of the history of language teaching methods. It arose out of centuries of the teaching of Latin grammar, texts and rhetoric, through exercises in grammatical manipulation and translation (Howatt 1984). As modern languages also became the focus of school study, they were taught using the same methods, which at the time aimed to provide intellectual challenge and develop logical thinking rather than to equip students to use the language. In the nineteenth century increased travel and commerce between European countries led to a greater interest in achieving oral proficiency in languages. Early reformers such as Gouin experimented with an approach based on child language

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7 Although this work is dated 1992 and it appears then that Stern’s comment refers to the early 1990s, in fact the book was edited and published after his death by two colleagues, and the date of the comment is therefore unclear.
acquisition, while later linguists such as Sweet and Vietor laid down ordered principles on phonology and teaching methods aimed at developing speaking and listening skills (Richards and Rodgers 1986, 2001).

This early work by what became known as the Reform Movement resulted, via contributions such as those by Sauveur and Franke, in the development of the Direct Method, characterized by: “…the use of the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the language classroom, and by the avoidance of the first language and of translation as a technique” (Stern 1983:456). Stern further maintains that this key aspect of the direct method persists until the present day, and, since many teachers are not able to teach wholly in L2, has introduced a schism between what they actually do in the classroom and what they believe they should be doing. In considering the context in which much English Language Teaching (ELT) takes place, in a non-English speaking country, and taught by a non-native speaker teacher, Harbord (1992) also recognises this schism. He argues that non-native speaker teachers feel guilty if they use L1, despite the fact that their proficiency may not be sufficient to teach solely in L2. Medgyes (1994:66) describes a case where a Hungarian teacher would laboriously explain a new word in English, and then give the Hungarian equivalent whispered into a pupil’s ear, such was the disapproval levelled at the idea of using L1 in class.

The direct method has had a profound influence on many of the methods and approaches which developed later. Although later methods cast off some of the principles of the direct method, the emphasis on use of the target language alone remained throughout the periods when Audio-lingualism, the Audio-visual approach, and Situational Language Teaching were in vogue (Howatt 1984). It largely remained through Krashen and Terrell’s (1992) Natural Approach, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the implementation of genre-based and competency-based curricula in Australia in the 1990s and beyond. In some eras and some methods, the avoidance of the first language took on almost evangelical proportions, and in others, though instruction took place in L2, the use of L1 was permitted at times. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) in comparing the Audio-lingual Method and the Communicative Approach, explain that in the former the use of the students’ native language is banned, and translation is only permitted at higher levels, whereas in the Communicative Approach selective use of the native language is accepted where feasible, and
translation may be used where students find it necessary or beneficial. Stern concedes that throughout the decades of adhesion to intralingual approaches there have been exceptions maintained by some writers and theorists. Dodson (1962, 1967), for example, advocated a ‘bilingual method’ which involved both cross-lingual and intralingual elements, and made systematic use of L1 in establishing meaning and in practising structures. Dodson believed that this was necessary since: “…the sign of true bilingualism is not merely the possession of two languages, but also the ability to jump easily from one to the other” (Dodson 1967:90, cited in Stern 1992:282).

In this Dodson differs markedly from Brooks (1964), a key methodologist of the time, who drew on the distinction made by Ervin and Osgood (1954) between co-ordinate and compound bilingualism. Brooks believed that co-ordinate bilingualism was the ideal aim of second language learning, whereby the two languages had to be kept strictly apart (Stern 1992). Widdowson (1979, 1994) too, long an influential writer in applied linguistics, has from time to time pleaded for the reconsideration of cross-lingual techniques such as translation. Swan (1985) in a critique of the Communicative Approach maintained that: “… as far as the British version of the Communicative Approach is concerned, students might as well not have mother tongues…students are always translating into and out of their own languages – and teachers are always telling them not to” (Swan 1985:85). He goes on to advocate a greater use of contrastive teaching, highlighting similarities and differences between L1 and L2, particularly in the area of pragmatics. These are lone voices, however, and as I shall attempt to show in later sections, intralingual strategies still very much hold sway in the contemporary ESL profession, in spite of periodic re-examination of the issue and recommendations for a wider role for the learner’s first language.

3.3.3 Second language acquisition theory

It is worth considering the theoretical orientations towards the first language in the language learning process in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), since the ESL profession draws from it some of its pedagogic rationale. ESL has other sources of theory, of course, such as the fields of education, adult learning, psychology and sociology but SLA is prominent, dealing as it does with questions of how second languages are learned.
The discipline of SLA is generally accepted to have begun in the late 1960s (Ellis 1994), but the first major theoretical position which has a bearing on the role of the first language in fact came from psycholinguists, the best known of whom is Skinner. Skinner (1957), working within a behaviourist orientation to human learning, coined the term ‘verbal behaviour’ as a description of language, and posited that second language learning was a matter of learning a set of new “habits” which had to override and replace the old “habits” of the first language. Methods which were based on this view of language, then, such as audio-lingualism proceeded from the belief that the first language should be avoided in the classroom as a hindrance. The concept of ‘interference’ was a part of this view, and referred to the effect of the L1 patterns being imposed on the L2, resulting in error. Training in L2 patterns (syntax, morphology, phonology) was considered best done in complete isolation from the L1.

In the field of first language acquisition, nativists such as Chomsky (1959) and Lenneberg (1967) challenged Skinner’s view of language and language learning by proposing that humans have an innate propensity to learn language, and that far from being a matter of stimulus-response and repeated imitation, as the behaviourists would have it, language learning is a process of constructing an internally logical grammatical, phonological and pragmatic system from fragmentary and imperfect input. This view is borne out in Chomsky’s notion of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which is supposed to be the locus of development of this system (Brown 1994). Nativist theory became associated with cognitive approaches to language teaching, which emphasised that errors were a sign of the learner’s conscious experimentation with the patterns of the language. This shift in views had an impact on the way the first language was regarded via a change in the interpretation of the significance of errors. In the behaviourist view, it was maintained that learner errors could be predicted by comparing the structures of L1 and L2. Where they differed, the learner would follow the L1 pattern, producing an error. Where the languages had the same structure ‘positive transfer’ would occur, resulting in an error-free utterance. This was known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, exemplified in the well-known quote by Lado: “…the student who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his [sic] native language will be simple for him, [sic] and those elements that are different will be difficult” (Lado 1957:2).
Error analysis, practised by those who favoured cognitive accounts of language learning, focussed on finding broader explanations for learner error than simply influence of the first language (Corder 1967). An increasing emphasis on intralingual errors (those originating within the target language itself) was reflected in growing interest in describing the learner’s ‘interlanguage’ (Selinker 1972), a language system with internal consistency which operates in the zone between L1 and L2 (Brown 1994). These developments resulted in a lessening of the emphasis on the negative influence of L1, but, perhaps because cognitivist theories of learning did not inform specific methods of language teaching in the same way as behaviourist theories informed audio-lingualism (Richards and Rodgers 1986), this theoretical change in the view of L1 does not appear to have altered very much the practitioners’ view of it as a hindrance to the learning process. Krashen, (1982) in his influential ‘Natural Approach’ to language learning suggested that errors showing the influence of the first language are a result of incomplete acquisition. Where the learner lacks a word or a structure in L2, she or he will ‘fall back’ on something based on L1. The ‘cure’ for L1-based errors then, is more acquisition through comprehensible input in the target language (Krashen and Terrell 1992:41). Although this is a more benign view of L1, it lays the groundwork for an emphasis on ‘more English’, and contributes to what Phillipson (1992a:185) describes as a major tenet of ELT worldwide: “English is best taught monolingually” (that is, without recourse to L1). He counts this as one of the contributors towards English linguistic imperialism.

Since the 1970s, interest in language learning has moved somewhat away from psycholinguistic approaches to a consideration of sociolinguistic factors which emphasise language as communication and as social interaction. One of the key figures in developing this orientation was Hymes (1972) in his work on ‘communicative competence’ which was influential in the developing of communicative language teaching. Schumann’s (1978) Acculturation Model pointed to the importance of social distance between the second-language society and the learner as a key indicator of whether learning would take place. The more involved the learner with the target group, the more successful the learning. Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) work on integrative motivation found much the same phenomenon. Although neither of these theories about social factors in SLA had much to say about language teaching, or still less the role of L1 therein, they have been influential in persuading language teachers of the virtues for
their students of becoming part of the target culture, and this usually means ignoring or minimising interaction in L1.

Norton Peirce (1995) has criticised SLA theorists for failing to articulate a theory of social interaction which takes account of the complex relationships of power between the individual and social structures. She argues that learners:

cannot be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted….. without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual (Norton Peirce 1995:12).

She proposes a theory of social identity, drawing on Bourdieu (1977b) and Weedon (1987), which attempts to place interaction in the L2 in a wider social context. Auerbach (1993) too is interested in social power relations between learners and society at large, and her work focusses partly on how the learners’ L1 is an important part of their identity. Her work will be described in more detail in a later section.

An area of SLA which has had an effect on teachers’ classroom practice is research on learning strategies, which has gathered ground since Rubin’s (1975) early work on ‘what makes a good language learner’. The research in this area has been made accessible to teachers and learners in the form of books such as those of Rubin and Thompson (1982), Wenden and Rubin (1987), and Oxford’s (1990) ‘Language learning strategies – what every teacher should know’. It has become commonplace for teachers to incorporate ‘learner strategy training’ into the classroom on a regular basis. James (1994), in arguing for a more prominent role for L1, claims that in Oxford’s taxonomy of strategies: “…no fewer than 60 per cent of those making up her ‘analysing and reasoning metastrategy’ are interlingual strategies … she claims that learners resort to translation to make input comprehensible; they analyse contrastively; and they transfer from NL to FL” (James 1994:208). It is true that Oxford makes this claim, but on looking further we realise that James overstates the prominence of these since Oxford’s taxonomy contains 62 strategies to do with memory, cognition, compensation, metacognition, affect and social action. A further ‘interlingual strategy’ included is ‘switching to the mother tongue’ (as a compensatory strategy) and with the three James
refers to this makes a total of 4 out of 62 which involve L1 in the learning of L2. The point here is not whether or not L1 is involved in 6.45% of learning strategies, or more or less, but that Oxford, like other writers on learning strategies, does not distinguish L1-based strategies as a category, or as worthy of any particular comment: it is effectively a non-issue, being subsumed within an array of cognitive, metacognitive and communication strategies.

There is a strand of thought which is critical of the discipline of SLA itself as being characterised by a monolingual perspective and therefore paying little heed to the fact that learners are becoming bilinguals, rather than double monolinguals (Kachru 1994, Sridhar 1994). As Kachru says: “…one fundamental misconception, pervasive in SLA literature, is that acquiring a second or additional language means being able to use it in the same way as its monolingual native speakers” (Kachru 1994:797). However Sridhar (1994) calls on Grosjean’s (1985) claim that bilingualism does not duplicate L1 competence, but rather complements it, to support his contention that the model of bilingualism relevant to SLA is a composite pragmatic model, in which a bilingual acquires “…as much competence in two or more languages as is needed and that all of the languages together serve the full range of communicative needs” (Sridhar 1994:802).

The rejection of a monolingual view of SLA has led some writers to consider learners’ use of L1 in second language learning as being a form of ‘code switching’ (Papaefthymiou-Lytra 1997, Kachru 1994, Littlewood 1984). Code switching, discussed in Chapter 3.1, is a well-recognised and well-documented practice of bilinguals (Hamers and Blanc 2000), and is frequently studied and discussed in the literature on bilingualism. Kasper (1997:353) argues that although code-switching is sometimes regarded as a “strategy to compensate for insufficient linguistic knowledge”, it can also serve as an ‘act of identity’ or a positive politeness strategy. The application of code switching theory to classroom practice suggests a fundamental difference in thinking from that common in the SLA field, of L1 as interference at worst, as a ‘communication strategy’ or sign of underdeveloped interlanguage at best. It shows that the learner is becoming a bilingual and there is an expectation that he or she will develop skills and strategies, including code-switching, used by bilinguals (Pillay and Wha 1997). The more traditional view sees the acquiring of English as an enterprise entirely separate from the first language, sometimes even replacing it, and L1 use is thus an intrusion, a
distraction, an unnecessary derailment of purposeful activity. Sridhar (1994) makes this point, claiming that in SLA learners’ first languages “…are not viewed as resources; they are at best shadowy presences, which have only a nuisance value as sources of interference and as the incompetent learner’s last resort for performing with competence” (Sridhar 1994:802). Similar arguments against a monolinguistic view of second language learning are also made by Firth and Wagner (1997) in their critique of SLA research, and continued by Hall (1997) and Rampton (1997) in their responses to Firth and Wagner.

Since the early 1990s in Australia, it is not SLA which has had the strongest influence on language teaching and particularly on ESL, but a theory of language and of language use. Halliday’s (1978, 1985) systemic functional model of language has been used extensively as the basis for the development of curricula in adult ESL (Feez 2001) as well as in teacher education curricula. It has been central to the development of the genre-based approach to teaching ESL (Burns et al. 1996), which has in turn informed the development of competency-based syllabuses now required by government bodies as a prerequisite for funding. Halliday’s theory of language has made an important contribution in the study of first language development (Painter 1991), but it does not include a theory of second language learning, and therefore does not in itself take a position on the role of the first language in SLA. The actual teaching methods used in curricula based on a systemic view of language and/or a genre-based view tend to be those of the communicative approach, and this includes the direct method practice of teaching wholly in the target language. As a result there is no systematic inclusion of L1 in the classroom, and it tends to be left to individual teachers to decide its role, if any.

3.3.4 Critical views of the role of L1 in English language learning

As well as perspectives from SLA theorists and of those who study the effectiveness of various methods, there are different views proposed by those who take a critical view of language use and language learning in a worldwide context. The term ‘critical’ here is used in the sense of: “…aiming to show up connections which may be hidden from people – such as …. connections between language, power and ideology” (Fairclough 1989:5). These critical writers can be considered in two groups: those writing about linguistic imperialism and those concerned with language learning and use as an issue of political and social identity.
In the writings on linguistic imperialism, the focus is more on English as a second language than language learning in general, since English is widely recognised as the major ‘world language’ and is thus perhaps the most obvious contender for examination of the effects of its dominance on societies, education systems and on individuals. I shall focus here on only a small aspect of this literature relevant to the present discussion: namely how these writers discuss the issue of the role of L1 in English language learning. Other aspects of this critical literature are examined in Chapter 3.4.

Phillipson (1992a) examines the creation of the ELT profession worldwide and proposes that it has been governed in the second half of the twentieth century by five key tenets, which he sets out to show as being fallacies. Those relevant to this discussion are that English is best taught monolingually – ie through the medium of English, the more English is taught, the better the results, and that the use of other languages will result in a drop in English standards. Phillipson demonstrates the faulty reasoning behind each of these in turn. With respect to the tenet ‘English is best taught monolingually’, Phillipson demonstrates how this arises both from colonial teaching experience and from the spoken language teaching methods originating from the Reform movement which were outlined earlier in this chapter. He cites physical and psychological sanctions which have at various times been used against students using L1 to claim that: “[a] monolingual methodology is organically linked with linguicist disregard of dominated languages, concepts and ways of thinking. It is highly functional in inducing a colonized consciousness” (Phillipson 1992a:187). In considering the tenet ‘the more English is taught, the better the results’, Phillipson cites Cummins (1984) as showing that the notion of maximum exposure as beneficial is fallacious. He states: “…there is no correlation between quantity of L2 input, in an environment where the learners are exposed to L2 in the community, and academic success” (Phillipson 1992a:211).

As to the tenet that ‘if other languages are used much, standards of English will drop’, Phillipson suggests that in some ‘periphery’ countries this may be true, particularly in the case of expanding education systems, under-trained teachers and few adequate

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Phillipson (1992a:17) makes a distinction between ‘core English-speaking countries’ such as Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and ‘periphery English-speaking countries’. The latter are of two types: countries which require English as an international language, such as Sweden and Japan, and countries on which English was imposed in colonial times. These terms correspond respectively to Kachru’s (1985) terms ‘inner circle’, ‘expanding circle’ and ‘outer circle’.
textbooks. However he points out that it is not true in the case of some ‘periphery’ countries such as Sweden and Denmark which use English as an international language much on their own terms. We should therefore reformulate the tenet as ‘if dominated languages are used much, standards in the dominant language will drop’. This, he claims, should lead us to ask whose the standards may be and whose interests they serve (Phillipson 1992a:215). Pennycook (1994), too, in his work on the hegemony of the English language, its speakers and teachers, claims that: “[t]he English language classroom, as idealized in the discourses of Western ELT theory, is not a place in which languages can be freely used and exchanged but rather has come to reflect a dogmatic belief in a monolingualist approach to language learning” (Pennycook 1994:169).

Other writers such as Auerbach (1993) and Canagarajah (1999a) emphasise that the monolingual teaching of ESL has a political dimension. Auerbach links common classroom practices to their ideological origins, pointing out that:

…monolingual instruction in the U.S. has as much to do with politics as with pedagogy. Its roots can be traced to the political and economic interests of dominant groups in the same way that the English Only movement has been; the rationale and research used to justify it are questionable; and there is increasing evidence that L1 and/or bilingual options are not only effective but necessary for adult ESL students with limited L1 and schooling backgrounds (Auerbach 1993:29).

Canagarajah (1999a) makes a similar point in his consideration of the domination of ELT by native speakers. He argues that the worldwide preference for native English speaker teachers both stems from and contributes to the status quo of monolingual teaching, and ensures continuing employment for ‘Centre’ teachers. This point is also made by Medgyes (1994) and Widdowson (1997). Skutnab-Kangas (1996, 2000a) takes a much stronger position on the issue of ignoring or banning use of the mother tongue. Writing about educational practice in the teaching of minority children, she states unequivocally: “[i]f you are an ESL teacher and/or you teach minority children through the medium of a dominant language, at the cost of their mother tongue, you are participating in linguistic genocide” (Skutnab-Kangas 2000a:25).

Among those who take a perspective on first language as a right and a social good is Ruiz (1988), who proposes three orientations towards language and its role in society
and education: language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource. He uses these three orientations to discuss attitudes and practices in US language planning.

3.3.5 The role of L1 in the ESL class - 1980s and 1990s

Over the last two decades there have been a number of calls, both in the international literature and in the Australian literature, for increasing attention to be paid to the role played by the learner’s L1 in the process of learning English as a Second Language. This section will detail the reasons why, according to the authors considered here, L1 has been ignored or undervalued, the reasons why it should have a greater role in the ESL class, ways of achieving this at a practical level, as well as cautions and reservations which have been voiced about L1 use. I shall first consider the literature from the 1980s and early 1990s and then that from the last five years in an attempt to show that little has changed, and the same calls are currently being made.

3.3.5.1 Reasons for lack of attention paid to L1

The contention that L1 has largely been ignored in the teaching of ESL (and EFL) needs little defence. All the authors cited in this section preface their discussion with this assertion, which is borne out by the examination of teaching and teacher education materials in Chapter 2. As Swan baldly states: “[a]s far as the British version of the communicative approach is concerned, students might as well not have mother tongues” (Swan 1985:85).

Four major reasons are frequently referred to as being behind the reluctance to include L1. The first is that L1 use is tainted by association with the grammar-translation method of teaching, which, as outlined in Chapter 3.3.2, is now seen as outdated, theoretically baseless and of little use in teaching learners to use language communicatively (Atkinson 1987, Rossner 1987, Piasecka 1986). The second reason is the influence of approaches to language teaching based on the direct method (Piasecka 1986, Harbord 1992, Atkinson 1987). A third reason is that many teachers of ESL and of EFL are trained in English-speaking countries where their practicums are done with mixed-language groups of students, and it appears axiomatic that L1 cannot be used in this context. As Phillipson (1992a) and Canagarajah (1999a) among others have pointed out, the L2-only training model has also often been followed in the training of non-native speaking teachers from parts of the world where they do share their students’ L1.
They suggest that this is an example of ‘ideological power’ exercised by Centre bureaucrats and educators. The term ‘ideological power’ is used here in the sense of “...the power to project one’s practices as universal and ‘common sense’” (Fairclough 1989:33). A related point is that the L2-only model of teacher training and teaching practice has suited the rapid growth of ELT as a casual career wherein monolingual, minimally-trained native speakers can work anywhere in the world (Widdowson 1992, Harbord 1992, Medgyes 1994). The fourth reason is the influence of Krashen’s (1982) work, which, while theoretically contested and even rejected by many linguists (Gregg 1984), has had enormous appeal to teachers in its insistence on maximum exposure to comprehensible input in the target language (Atkinson 1987).

3.3.5.2 Benefits of L1 use

I shall now review some reasons given in the literature for why L1 is an important part of the process of learning L2. First is the fact that for adult learners, L1 forms part of their experience which they bring to any learning. As Corder puts it:

Second language learners not only already possess a language system which is potentially available as a factor in the acquisition of a second language, but equally importantly they already know something of what a language is for, what its communicative functions and potentials are (Corder 1992:24).

He further points out that it is inconceivable that this knowledge should not play a part in learning a second language, since all we know about learning suggests that previous knowledge and skills are drawn upon in the acquisition of new ones. He suggests that the effect of the mother tongue in learning L2 is “... predominantly heuristic and facilitatory; it helps in the process of discovery and creation” (Corder 1992:25).

Baynham states that the “… ignoring of the learner’s own pre-existing knowledge of how language works” (Baynham 1983:10) recalls the Freirean criticism of an approach to education which sees the learner as a blank slate and the teacher as the keeper of all knowledge (Freire 1972). Littlewood (1984) in discussing transfer, argues that the learner uses his or her knowledge of language, gained from the mother tongue, to organise the second language data, and that this is both economical and productive since it means the learner does not have to discover everything from scratch. Swan (1985) maintains that if we did not constantly make correspondence between vocabulary items in L1 and L2 we would never learn foreign languages at all: “[i]magine having to ask
whether each new French car one saw was called ‘voiture’ instead of just deciding that the foreign word was used in much the same way as ‘car’ and acting accordingly” (Swan 1985:85)

All these authors recognise that if learners assume that L2 works in exactly the same way as L1 they will run into trouble: it is this issue that those who study transfer and interlanguage examine (Ellis 1994). Rather these authors are arguing for teachers to take a more informed perspective on the value of L1 as prior experience, and for an end to the attempt “…to destroy the firm association that the learner has between his [sic] native language and the universe of things” (Piasecka 1986:29).

There is an argument that however much teachers ignore the learners’ L1, it is inevitable that learners will refer back to it (Swan 1985, Piasecka 1986, James 1999). Danchev, in his examination of the roles played by transfer and translation, and their interrelationship in second language learning, maintains that translation is a natural, unconscious, spontaneous process which cannot be checked, and that being so, teachers should try to “capture, channel and exploit it” (Danchev 1992:51). He cites Halliday et al. who claim that: “… if one is taught a second language...even by something approaching the ‘direct method’, one usually sets up patterns of translation equivalence” (Halliday et al. 1964:125, cited in Danchev 1992:47).

In arguing for a greater role for bilingual teachers, Piasecka (1988) describes how their knowledge of two languages can enable them to monitor this process of referring back to L1 and help students to avoid false assumptions and analogies. Swan (1985:85), too, maintains that “students are always translating into and out of their own languages – and teachers are always telling them not to”.

Closely allied to the idea that recourse to L1 is inevitable is the claim by Atkinson (1987) and Harbord (1992) that drawing on the mother tongue is a learner-preferred strategy. Atkinson goes on to point out that there is a contradiction between the fact that we know very little for certain about what constitutes effective language learning, yet teachers are often too ready to impose their views on learners in opposition to what the learners find helpful. There is, too, the argument that “… a belief in the way one approaches a task is likely to affect one’s chances of success” (Atkinson 1987:242), or in other words, if students think referring back to L1 will help them, it probably will.
Interestingly, in Birch’s (1992) study of ESL trainee teachers as second language learners learning in the country where the language is spoken (Thailand) he found that the teachers had a strong desire for their L1 to be used in class:

… most of them felt that they could not have coped as well with the Thai lessons if English had not been used in class to explain features of the language. This contrasted with their own insistence that only English be used in their English classes (Birch 1992:293).

This finding of Birch’s suggests that inclusion of L1 is a learner-preferred strategy even when the learner is a teacher whose training and prior beliefs have led him or her to advocate an English-only approach.

A broader, more sociolinguistic argument for the inclusion of L1 in the learning process is made by Collingham (1988), Hopkins (1988) and Piasecka (1986) and concerns the role of L1 in the adult’s concept of self. Piasecka (1986) argues that the individual’s sense of identity is inextricably intertwined with one’s mother tongue, and that if learners are expected to ignore it, their sense of identity may well be threatened.

Hopkins (1988) continues this idea, claiming that the first language is part of a person’s essence, and connected with his or her emotions, dreaming, world concepts and group identity. Our understanding of the concept of social identity has expanded considerably since these statements were made, as Auerbach’s (1993, 1995), Norton’s (1997) and Norton Peirce’s (1995) work referred to in Chapter 3.3.4 shows, but they too would concur with the idea of L1 as a significant part of a person’s (multiple) identity. Denying a place for the learner’s L1 in the ESL classroom can, according to some authors, be disrespectful towards the learners’ speech community: it constitutes a denial of their right to maintain, use and be proud of their language and culture (Baynham 1983). Norton quotes Bourdieu’s contention that “…..at the level of relations between groups, a language is worth what those who speak it are worth…” (Bourdieu 1977b:652 cited in Norton 1997:409) to show the intrinsic link between valuing a language and valuing, or respecting, those who are its speakers. Using L1 as part of a bilingual approach to teaching, will, Collingham (1988) maintains, assist in increasing the status of minority languages in the community. This, she argues, will raise the self-esteem of the learners and thus contribute to their more effective learning. She also points out that
encouraging students’ contributions in L1 at low levels reduces the likelihood of lesson content being trivial and patronizing. Harbord (1992) considers including L1 to be part of an overall ‘humanistic’ approach to teaching, since it allows students to say what they want and to be themselves.

A further argument for the inclusion of L1 in learning L2 is that selective use of comparative and contrastive techniques can help students to acquire awareness of the conceptual, formal and cultural differences between their own language and English (Hopkins 1988). Baynham (1983) too, advocates heightening learners’ awareness of the patterns of the target language by contrasting them with equivalent features in their own language.

“...[T]he aim of second language acquisition is bilingualism” states Sridhar (1994:800), and, as discussed in Chapter 3.3.3, a monolingual perspective can lead to the obscuring of this truism. Often the goal of second language instruction has been to produce native-speaker-like abilities, and since this is rare, not only do learners fail on this account, but more importantly, it sets up a native speaker monolingual instead of a bilingual as the ideal speaker (Sridhar 1994). Fishman (1976) writes that the goal of second language instruction should be to produce functional bilingualism, and to act otherwise is unrealistic and counter-productive. He maintains that most learners will never want or need to function purely in L2 but will continue to use their first language in some domains.

One of the early advocates of cross-lingual teaching methods, Dodson (1967, cited in Piasecka 1986:30), argued that a true bilingual is able to switch rapidly from one language to another, and leaving L1 out of the learning process is likely to inhibit learners’ ability to do this. This early argument is taken up by Papaefthymiou-Lytra (1997) in her discussion of language switch in second- and foreign-language learning contexts. In their discussion of an intercultural approach to language learning, Crozet and Liddicoat (1999) emphasise that the bilingual or multilingual speaker is the goal to aim for, since only this is what language learners can become. They will never become monolingual native speakers, which has appeared to be the target in the past. These authors also argue that if learners are to be encouraged to be bilinguals or multilinguals, their first language(s) need to be included in the classroom.
Byram and Risager (1999:2) describe competence in a second language as involving the ability to see relationships between the two languages and cultures, and to deal with difference. It should not entail casting off one’s own social identities and attempting to become a native speaker of the second language.

Baynham (1983) points out that since bilingualism is the norm in immigrant minority communities, the teaching of English should have as its aim the addition of another language as opposed to the replacement of the mother tongue. To act otherwise is to waste the language resources available in the community. In the USA, Ruiz (1988) points out the irony of educators lamenting the lack of ‘foreign’ language skills of English-speakers, while ignoring the fact that precisely those skills have been purposely eradicated in non-English speakers through the operation of educational and social policy.

A possible skill for any bilingual is to perform interpreting and/or translation. (As Robinson (1994) points out, bilingualism is a necessary but not sufficient skill for interpreters: there are many linguistic, vocational and ethical practices which must be learned. The key point here, however, is that formal or informal interpreting work is potentially open to the bilingual.) ESL instruction which ignores the first language also ignores the possibility that learners may wish to pursue interpreting as a profession or to perform it informally within their speech community (Baynham 1983), a point also made by Stern (1992:286) and Danchev (1982:51).

3.3.5.3 Negative effects of L1 use
Most authors, in arguing for increased recognition for L1 in the L2 classroom, advocate a principled approach to its inclusion which inevitably involves setting some limits on its use. Not to do so risks a return to a classroom where teacher and students talk about the L2 in L1 and students develop little communicative competence. This is particularly the case in linguistically homogenous classes where the teacher shares the students’ language. As Atkinson (1987) points out, it can lead to students feeling that they have not understood a new item until it has been translated, or students using L1 in performing communicative activities when the point is for them to be done in English. O’Grady and Wajs (1989:56) list a number of strategies teachers can use if L1 is being overused, but they maintain that if students understand the purpose of a bilingual approach, and the ground rules thereof, they are less likely to over-rely on L1. Hopkins’
(1988) study found that some students felt time was wasted using L1 which could have been better spent using L2, but as Medgyes (1994:67) points out, judicious use of L1 in certain situations can actually save a lot of class time. O’Grady and Kang’s (1985) study found a number of teacher concerns about negative effects of the use of L1, but these tend to be either unproven (for example the contention that L1 acts as a crutch, creating dependency and reducing the urge to speak English) or theoretically indefensible (for example the contentions that L1 may interfere with L2, and that referring back to the first language inhibits acquisition of the target language).

3.3.5.4 Translation

It is worth considering what has been said about translation as a teaching device, since there appear to be sharply divided opinions on it. Associated as it is with the grammar-translation teaching method, it has been cast out of communicative approaches to ESL as irrelevant, difficult, boring, pointless and uncommunicative (Duff 1989). There are, however, several authors and teachers willing to argue for its place as a valid and valuable learning activity. Duff maintains that translation:

… develops three important qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility. It trains the learner to search (flexibility) for the most appropriate words (accuracy) to convey what is meant (clarity). This combination of freedom and constraint allows the students to contribute their own thoughts to a discussion which has a clear focus – the text (Duff 1989:7).

Zabalbeascoa (1997) acknowledges that translation as a pedagogic device suffered a period of banishment, but maintains that it is now making a comeback. He offers two solutions to the problem of its negative connotations: first, being aware of the difference between translation pedagogy and pedagogical translation, and between translator competence and linguistic competence, and second, integrating translation activities into an eclectic, communicative methodology (Zabalbeascoa 1997:122). Other authors who see a useful role for pedagogical translation are Piasecka (1986), Atkinson (1987), Baynham (1983) and Danchev (1982). As far as spontaneous mental or verbal translation is concerned, (as opposed to translation as a purposeful teaching activity), some claim that this is an inevitable part of second language learning, which learners will do whether or not teachers attempt to stop it (Swan 1985, Danchev 1982). This
being so, they argue, the tendency is better harnessed and directed productively rather than ignored or prohibited.

3.3.6 Contemporary perspectives on L1: international

The overall tone of the arguments presented in Chapter 3.3.5 from the 1980s and 1990s in favour of a greater recognition of the place of L1 in the learning of ESL and other second languages, is one of optimism about the dawning of a new era of recognition for L1 in second language learning. There are suggestions of a turning of the tide away from the prevailing orthodoxy of instruction solely via the medium of L2. It is now interesting to look at a selection of writings from the last five years to see whether and how these ideas have progressed, and whether they have been incorporated into ESL teaching in general.

An edited collection of email posts on the TESL-L EJ Forum, an international discussion list for ESL and EFL teachers and researchers shows that there is still considerable debate, at least among classroom teachers, about whether L1 should be admitted to the ESL class. As the editor comments: “…there seems to be a wide range of opinions on the degree of L1 use. One end of this spectrum [sic] favours banning the L1 from the classroom totally; the remainder (a fairly large remainder) proposes various types of L1 use or limitation” (Stanley, 2002:1).

Florez (2000) reports a study on whether or not to use L1 in the adult ESL class when teacher and students share the same L1, and concludes that limited and systematic use is beneficial. Canagarajah (1999a) refers to the still-prevailing exclusive use of L2 in language teaching, and Papaefthymiou-Lytra (1997) mentions that use of L1 has until now often been viewed as evidence of deficit in L2. Jessner argues that it is the exception rather than the rule for teachers to point out common features between L1 and L2 or L3, but since this is clearly facilitative “the role of L1 in the L2 classroom should therefore clearly be re-examined” (Jessner 1999:206). James (1999:111) maintains that “holding one’s two (or more) languages in isolation from one another is an undesirable state of affairs for the FL learner”, suggesting that most classrooms lend themselves to exactly this state of affairs. Rinvolucri (2001) describes his change of heart from banning the students’ L1 in the class to admitting its value, and suggests a range of activities which can draw on the mother tongue. He gives some activities given for
teachers of linguistically homogenous classes who speak their students’ L1, and some for mixed-language classes where the teacher does not share the students’ mother tongues. Turnbull and Arnett (2002) conducted a review of theoretical and empirical literature on teachers’ use of the target language (L2) and of L1 in second and foreign language teaching. They concluded that there appears to be near consensus that L2 use should be maximised but that more studies are needed to determine if judicious use of L1 might help input to become intake. However, since their focus was largely on LOTE and less on ESL, a more relevant picture of current thinking is that of Cook (2001). Cook presents a wide-ranging justification for a re-examination of “…the time-honoured view that the first language should be avoided in the classroom by teachers and students” (Cook 2001:402).

It is both the continued scarcity of articles recommending more attention to L1 as well as the tone of the articles discussed here which leads to the conclusion that not a great deal has changed in the last two decades in the use of direct-method, English-only instruction in ESL contexts. The tone of these articles, whether from 1982 or 2002, is still one of pleading for a greater role for the L1 in the face of standard practice, which still seems to be to exclude it or to see it as something to be tolerated under limited circumstances. There are, however, no articles promoting or defending L2-only classrooms to be found, and this too suggests that L2-only is such an article of faith, such an established reality, that it needs no defence.

3.3.7 Past and present practice regarding L1 in Australian ESL

Let us now consider Australian ESL to see whether it shows the same or different trends to the international literature so far discussed. Language policy and the history of the ESL profession were discussed in Chapter 2. This section will consider the evolution of approaches to L1 in Australian ESL.

Until the late 1990s ESL teaching to newly-arrived migrants was largely the preserve of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), while TAFE colleges taught English to those who had reached a proficiency sufficient to enable them to undertake trade courses. Since the question of the relevance of L1 to the language learning process has generally been considered most pertinent to low-level learners, it is AMEP policy and practice which is the focus of this section. In the early 1980s, pressure was building for
a review of AMEP English provision. A number of reports were commissioned, several of which identified a desire on the part of many learners for the use of their L1 in the learning process, through, among other things, bilingual teaching (Morrissey and Palser 1981, King and Palser 1983, Baumgart et al. 1983, DIEA 1982, Brindley 1984, Brennan 1986). These studies led to a major review of the AMEP (Campbell 1986). The Campbell report was in favour of increasing the amount and variety of bilingual support (that is use of L1 in the classroom and in related administrative and pastoral contexts). It stated that:

From both teachers and learners there has come a strong plea for the provision of bilingual support – that is, the appointment of persons whose native language is other than English who would assist in both the teaching and learning process (Campbell 1986:94).

It further stated that there was a need for qualified language teachers with a non-English language background, citing several submissions to the Review to this effect, and maintaining that:

…and there is a wealth of evidence…to show that learners who have an inadequate development of L1 (and many of the AMEP learners are in this category) are, in the absence of bilingual teachers, unlikely to become anything but semi-lingual in English… (Campbell 1986:96).

In 1985 there appeared a very detailed study by the NSW AMES on ‘Use of the learner’s first language in adult migrant education’ (O’Grady and Kang 1985) which had been initiated a year earlier as a result of previous research studies and pressure from ethnic organisations. This project had four aims:

- to investigate issues relating to the use of L1, including identifying conditions where use of L1 is most desirable;
- to investigate learner and teacher attitudes to L1;
- to pilot different methodologies in the use of L1; and
- to prepare broad guidelines for the use of L1 in AMES.

In their literature review O’Grady and Kang cited then-current research into the role of L1 in L2 learning as well as studies which show that in the Australian context, immigrant learners themselves were expressing strong preference for teachers who
could use their L1 in the class (Morrissey and Palser 1981, Baumgart et al. 1983, DIEA 1982). They also found that most teachers stated that they were in favour of students having access to L1 support, although many also expressed reservations about its effect on their English language learning. The report concluded with 23 recommendations which were overwhelmingly in favour of increasing the use of L1 in ESL provision. The recommendations covered the use of L1 in course provision, increased use of bi/multilingual promotion, publicity and information, bilingual materials development, in-service development on strategies for including bilingual personnel and teaching strategies, and staff recruitment – the latter stressing the importance of recruitment of bilingual teachers. The researchers were careful to distance themselves from the negative connotations commonly encountered about the use of L1 in the ESL class:

… (we) understand bilingual teaching to be the careful, controlled use of the mother tongue for certain purposes, such as, to contextualise a lesson, to reduce anxiety and to provide the rationale for a learning activity. There is no suggestion of a return to the grammar/translation method with its dearth of opportunity to develop communicative skills. Effective bilingual teaching uses learners’ languages as a resource, but English remains the dominant language in the classroom (O’Grady 1987:172).

Other relevant publications in this period include that by Bagshaw (1985) and Yip (1983) who both looked at the benefits to students of having a Bilingual Information Officer working in tandem with a (monolingual) ESL teacher, and that by Yip and Nguyen (1985). The latter was a report of an evaluation of a bilingual on-arrival course and it concluded that bilingual teaching was valuable in building student confidence, in orienting students to unfamiliar teaching approaches, in explaining cultural differences, in checking understanding, in permitting students to ask questions, and in clarifying course objectives.

The enthusiasm, however, appeared to be short-lived. Tejos (1986) found that while both monolingual and bilingual (that is NNS) AMES teachers endorsed the inclusion of L1 in teaching, the continued lack of action on mobilising bilingual resources suggested the existence of an assimilationist perspective in the profession. By 1987 O’Grady and Wajs were lamenting that there then appeared to be fewer bilingual courses than there had been before the AMEP Review: the O’Grady and Kang (1985) report had listed 38
such courses as taking place in the years 1982 – 1984. O’Grady and Wajs (1987) gave several reasons for this decline which can be considered for the purposes of the argument here, as threefold. First, they explain, bilingual teachers (which, as discussed in 3.1.8, always means ‘non-native English-speakers’) suffer a stigma related both to their own non-native status and to the association of L1 use with old-fashioned pre-communicative teaching methods. Second, since bilingual teachers are a thinly-spread minority, they fear adverse career implications if they specialise in bilingual teaching: being restricted to low-level classes, being required to teach in a variety of sites, and being called upon to perform non-teaching duties such as counselling. Third, the authors claim the lack of a “defined bilingual methodology” (O’Grady and Wajs 1987:4) as a possible source of fading interest in bilingual teaching, and it is this problem that they set out to address in a handbook for bilingual teachers titled “A Bilingual Approach to Teaching English to Adult Migrants” (O’Grady and Wajs 1989). This teacher-friendly publication drew on the earlier studies, and the National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco 1987) to provide a rationale for the principled and systematic use of L1 in the ESL class. It explored common myths about the use of L1 and gave detailed suggestions for setting up and running bilingual programs with samples of classroom materials.

A new direction was broached in 1991 by Chau, a practitioner of bilingual teaching in Chinese and English, who set out to discover how students use their first language in classroom interactions. As she points out, the studies to date had relied upon student and teacher interviews about beliefs and practices regarding L1 use, but none investigated actual data on the content and purpose of students’ L1 utterances. Chau chose to research the use of L1 in small group work in her own class which was composed of Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) learners. She as the teacher is a Cantonese speaker who also understands Mandarin. Chau’s findings have important implications for ESL teachers who ponder whether interacting in L1 is a valid classroom activity. She found that:

…learners use their L1 predominantly as a language learning resource and it can be seen both as a communication strategy and as a learning strategy. L1 is also found to be serving metalinguistic functions which are conducive to learning (Chau 1991:5).

Examples of the students’ use of L1 were to clarify or to check meaning, to ask for the meaning in L1, to prompt other students, to clarify classroom instructions and to
comment on their own difficulties or inadequacies. Chau concluded that L1 use is mainly task-oriented rather than constituting a departure from the teacher’s desired direction, and suggests that therefore it is essential that teachers have a positive attitude to L1. She warns against considering L1 use solely in terms of its reducing the time available for practising L2, and argues cogently that the students whom she studied were using L1 as an important linguistic, metalinguistic and communicative resource which served well established functions in learning L2 (Chau 1993). Liang, too, studied the use of L1 in group interactions in a class mainly composed of Chinese speakers from a different perspective, and concluded that not only did L1 have a key role to play in reasoning about L2 subject matter, but it also performed an important interpersonal function in negotiation of social and cultural identities (Liang 2000). While studies such as these are still few in number, these two do suggest that L1 tends to be used in a principled, purposeful and largely task-oriented way by learners, and this will be important to consider in looking at the data in the present study on teachers’ views of how students use L1.

Tung (1993) maintained that the issues of whether L1 should be used at all, and if so how, and how much, were still controversial. From this we can deduce that not a great deal had changed by the early 1990s. O’Grady and Kang’s (1985) report led to the establishment of a Bilingual Steering Committee in 1990 (Masters 1993) which planned implementation of its 23 recommendations. These covered the use of L1 in course provision, promotion and publicity, materials development, in-service training and staff recruitment. Some of these recommendations have been implemented (Joyce 2002), such as the establishment of bilingual information materials and phone support, and the publishing of Learner Handbooks in 15 languages to explain such things as curriculum and language learning approaches. The recommendations pertaining to teacher recruitment and fostering of bilingual skills in the existing workforce have not been implemented, and the main reason for this was the restructuring of the AMEP program in 1997. The Program was put out to public tender and NSW AMES lost three of its five regions. It had to make 500 redundancies, and although one of the criteria for retaining a position was knowledge of a community language, in reality the Service lost many bilingual teachers (O’Grady 2002). The decision was therefore made to concentrate resources on the development of bilingual self-access materials (Chau 2002). A recent initiative, too, has been the Bilingual Assistants Pilot Program (Chau 2001) which
deployed 39 bilingual assistants to give support to students in 14 languages in tandem with their main ESL class teacher.

3.3.8 Summary of the role of the first language in second language learning

Chapter 3.3 has reviewed the literature regarding past and present theory, policy and practice regarding the use of L1 in the teaching of ESL. It first reviewed both the history of method in language teaching and then second language acquisition theory, from the perspective of a contention of this thesis that attitudes towards L1 are part of a dominant monolingual approach in the ELT profession. Literature from the last two decades which argued for the inclusion of L1 was reviewed, and was compared with the literature of the last five years in order to examine whether views have changed on the role of L1 in L2 learning. Methods can be broadly classified as intra-lingual or cross-lingual (Stern 1992), the first, which is now almost universal, minimising L1, the second making it an integral part of teaching. The field of SLA has had a number of perspectives on L1, ranging from a hindrance to an aid, and more recently has seen it as a key part of a learner’s social and linguistic identity as a bilingual. Critical perspectives on the role of L1 were examined, and these tend to show that little has changed in the dominant practice of restricting the use of L1 in the ESL classroom. Finally the arguments and programs in Australian ESL up to the present were examined. Overall it seems clear that the role of L1 is still debated, and while there are no current arguments for it to be banned, in practice it seems that ESL teachers commonly prohibit or limit it. Supporters of the use of L1 find the need to justify its inclusion on similar grounds to those used two decades ago.
3.4 Critical Approaches to TESOL

3.4.1 Introduction to critical approaches to TESOL

Chapter 3.4 will consider current critical approaches to TESOL as well as to the wider field of applied linguistics. The focus of this study is on the value, or lack of it, placed on the language learning experience of ESL teachers, and this thesis contends that such experience has been ignored within the discourse and practice of the profession. There is very little literature which addresses this exact question, and so it becomes necessary to examine why there might be such an absence. In order to question this absence of focus on teacher language learning, it is necessary to go outside the accepted parameters of the various theoretical fields contributing to ESL. The previous sections of this literature review have all discussed areas which are commonly accepted parts of the literature on bilingualism and second language learning. Since none of these fields throw much light at all on the specific research questions of this thesis, we need to look beyond them to see whether it may be the actual conceptions of theory and practice within TESOL itself which may be the problem. This is precisely what a critical approach does: instead of taking for granted the accepted borders of a theoretical field, or of established practice, it seeks to find new tools to discover, among other things, what questions have not hitherto been asked, and why that might be so. Critical approaches to TESOL, then, may provide useful theoretical justification for asking the research questions, as well as possible tools for explaining the findings of this study.

Since the early 1990s there has been an increasing number of critiques of the dominant place of English in the world, and of the structure and practices of the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession as a worldwide enterprise. These critiques have also been applied to the entire discipline of Applied Linguistics and to the sub-discipline of Second Language Acquisition, as being among the main fields which inform ELT theoretically. The critiques have taken place in the international arena and while links are made here to Australian ESL, for the most part the authors discussed refer to worldwide contexts, and so the term ELT is used to include ESL and EFL.
The sense in which ‘critical’ is used here is as defined by Fairclough (1989) in explaining the field of critical language study as follows: “Critical is used in the special sense of aiming to show up connections which may be hidden from people – such as the connections between language, power and ideology…” (Fairclough 1989:5).

Pennycook (forthcoming) acknowledges that the notion of ‘critical’ applied linguistics, is greatly struggled over. He describes several ways of ‘doing’ ‘critical applied linguistics’: as a critique of mainstream applied linguistics, or as critical text analysis, or as an attempt to understand the global spread of English, all of which attempt to relate language to broad social, cultural and political relations. However, he says, merely drawing such connections is not enough: to be ‘critical’ we need to take a problematic view of social relations in order to discover how language perpetuates inequitable social relations, and to use this analysis towards social transformation.

A central element of critical applied linguistics, therefore, is a way of exploring language in social contexts that goes beyond mere correlations between language and society, and instead raises more critical questions to do with access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance. It also insists on an historical understanding of how social relations came to be the way they are (Pennycook forthcoming:18-19).


An early contribution to the critical literature is that of Pennycook (1990), who argued that a major shortcoming in second language education was its isolation from broader issues in educational and social theory. He maintained that language teachers and applied linguists were preoccupied with questions which derive from an instrumentalist
and positivist orientation towards language teaching. This orientation is removed from consideration of its social, cultural, political and historical contexts and implications. He argued for the establishment of a ‘critical pedagogy’, which he describes as beginning with the recognition that all knowledge is socially and historically constructed, and that therefore all claims to knowledge are ‘interested’ (Pennycook 1990). That is, knowledge is never neutral, but always reflects the interests of various parties and is therefore bound up with questions of power and power relations.

The ‘power’ which is exercised through language and via established norms of language education (Auerbach 1993, 1995, Phillipson 1992a, Norton Peirce 1995) also needs defining. Fairclough maintains that power can be exercised through coercion, as in the application of force or sanctions by bodies such as the police, army and legislative organisations, and also by consent. Exercising power through consent involves convincing others that it is in their best interests to conform, and occurs via “an unconscious acceptance of institutional practices” (Auerbach 1995:10). It is this latter sense of the exercise of power through consent which is most relevant to considerations of language teaching. Practices which derive from particular views of teaching and learning, of immigrants and their rights and responsibilities, of government-subsidised language teaching or of fee-for-service language teaching, of bilingualism, of second language acquisition, of curriculum and of teaching methodology, come to be seen as ‘common sense’ and unavailable for challenge. It will be argued later in the thesis that the primacy of English in the ESL classroom, the ignoring of bi- and multilingualism among learners and the ignoring of teachers’ languages have become normalised by long-standing practice and by research conducted within a loop which does not permit such practices to be challenged. All professions have their own discourses, and in fact part of the definition of a profession is having a particular way of structuring talk and practice both to signify belonging and to exclude outsiders (Scollon and Scollon 1995). Ramanathan (2002) calls these self-perpetuating and self-legitimizing forms of discourse ‘thought collectives’ (after Fleck 1981) and argues that it is difficult, but crucial, to think outside these accepted patterns in a critical fashion in order to raise awareness of how teachers sustain and reproduce various biases and assumptions in TESOL. Fairclough refers to the tendency to see a dominant discourse type as ‘common sense’ as “the naturalization of a discourse type” (Fairclough 1992:91), which is a process by which discourse types appear to be neutral, obvious, in the best interests of all, and divorced of any link with the interests of groups or individuals. Pennycook
refers to this process when he describes the worldwide spread of English as being seen as “natural, neutral and beneficial” (Pennycook 1994:7). Fairclough (1992) goes on to describe how a naturalised discourse type comes to be seen as outside ideology even while it is intensely ideological in that it represents the wielding of power through mutual agreement: the ‘power by consent’ referred to above. Ideology, as used in this context (while recognizing that it is a much-contested term), has the Marxist sense of “the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests or, more broadly, from a definite class or group” (Williams 1983:156). Fairclough (1989) goes on to explain the links between ideology and power, and ideology and language, saying that the exercise of power in modern society is most often achieved through the ideological workings of language.

These ideas did not originate, of course, in applied linguistics, but stem from an increasing interest in how language shapes society by social theorists such as Bourdieu (1977a, 1991), Foucault (1969) and Habermas (1984) in recent decades. The ideas of these and other social theorists have been tapped and applied to the study of the spread of English, the establishment of ELT and the acceptance of particular pedagogies in ELT.

### 3.4.2 The spread of English

It is now commonplace to regard English as the dominant world language (Crystal 1997a) and to recognize that this has occurred in part through colonial expansion (Pennycook 1994) and in part through modern processes of globalization in trade and electronic communications (Warschauer 2000). Warschauer (2000) maintains that the spread of English is neither good nor bad, but most definitely not neutral. Instead, it carries with it a set of ideologies, values and norms and tends to privilege certain groups and viewpoints. Tollefson (1991, 1995) argues that the role of language in determining social and economic relationships is essentially a feature of human action, and can be seen clearly in language planning and policy relating to English, while Eggington (1992) sees English in two ways which are in tension with each other: as a language of social empowerment and as a language of cultural imperialism. Discussions about the meaning and implications of the spread of English range around a number of issues, one being the question of who owns English: native speakers or non-native speakers, ‘core’ (English-speaking) countries or ‘periphery’ (non-English-speaking) countries
(Phillipson 1992a), or the ‘inner circle’, ‘expanding circle’ and ‘outer circle’ of English users (Kachru 1992). ‘Ownership’ issues have been discussed by Widdowson (1994), Norton (1997), Pennycook (1994) and Graddol (1999) as well as extensively by Kachru (1985, 1995). Kachru (1965) is the originator of the concept of ‘World Englishes’, which gathered force in the 1970s (Kachru 1995) and which means the varieties of English which have become established in many countries and are used for varying intranational and international purposes. He calls for recognition of this diversity of Englishes and the establishment of new paradigms for teaching and research related to sociolinguistic profiles in each English-using region. He rejects traditional distinctions between native- and non-native varieties of English, as he does those between ENL (English as a native language), ESL and EFL.

The detrimental effect of the spread of English on local languages and on the languages of immigrants is another of the key issues and this is examined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1995, 1996, 2000a), Fishman (1991) and Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995). At its most extreme, the effect of the dominance of English (and, sometimes, other powerful languages) on less powerful languages has been termed ‘linguicide’ or ‘linguistic genocide’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000b).

Phillipson (1992a) in his seminal work ‘Linguistic Imperialism’ traces the history and politics of the development and spread of English as a world language and conducts an analysis of it at an ideological level, paying particular attention to the ELT profession as a powerful actor in maintaining the dominance of English. Phillipson uses the following definition of linguistic imperialism:

....the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structural refers broadly to material properties (for example institutions, financial allocations) and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties (for example, attitudes, pedagogic principles) (Phillipson 1992a:47).

While Phillipson’s theory of linguistic imperialism is contested by some (Davies 1996, Rajagopalan 1999a, 1999b), it has been widely influential in shaping some of the work in critical applied linguistics in the last decade. It also makes an explicit link between the worldwide spread of English and the growth and development of the ELT
profession. Phillipson (1992a) maintains that ELT is a convenient and highly profitable
vehicle for the ‘core’ English-exporting countries such as Britain, the United States and
to a lesser extent Australia. The desire of many ‘periphery’ countries for English and the
readiness to provide ‘expertise’ of the ‘core’ countries guarantee the continued
expansion of a lucrative trade. This trade both guarantees employment for a legion of
native English-speaking teachers and often leads to a disregard or undervaluing of the
pedagogic and linguistic skills of teachers in the ‘periphery’. This tendency is discussed
further in the next section on the ELT profession.

3.4.3 The ELT profession

The profession of English language teaching has come under particular scrutiny by
critical applied linguists. Let us turn now to consider in what ways ELT as it has been
practised reflects the dominant discourses, and how this might be relevant to the focus
of this thesis on the language learning background of Australian ESL teachers.

Howatt (1984), in his history of the English language teaching profession does not take
a critical perspective. He does refer in the epilogue to the difficulty and falseness of
asking learners to withhold, or suspend, their literacy in L1 in order to learn through the
monolingual, oral-based methods which have been common in both audio-lingualism
and communicative teaching, but essentially this work is not a ‘critical’ history of ELT.
Critical approaches have been taken by both Phillipson (1992a, 1992b) and Pennycook
(1994).

Phillipson (1992a) traces both British and American strategies for the promotion of
English and of English-based expertise in ensuring their interests in post-war political
and economic affairs. He then describes the growth and development of the ELT
profession, ascribing a key role to the Commonwealth Conference on Teaching of
English as a Second Language at Makerere, Uganda, in 1961. The Makerere Report
established a doctrine to underlie ELT which Phillipson has expressed in five key
tenets:

1. English is best taught monolingually
2. The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker
3. The earlier English is taught the better the results
4. The more English is taught the better the results
5. If other languages are used much, standards will drop (Phillipson 1992a:185)

Phillipson terms all of these ‘fallacies’ and goes on to show how each was formed and put into action. Much of his discussion centres on how these ‘fallacies’ affected language planning and teaching in African, Indian and Asian educational systems, but he also claims that they were adopted in the EFL sector serving the adult education market. He states that the monolingual approach to EFL in Europe and Japan was the hallmark which set it aside from foreign language teaching, which was firmly based on a bilingual tradition. This monolingual approach to the teaching of English in EFL and ESL (which was discussed in Chapter 3.3) is one of the ‘tenets’ or fallacies which are relevant to this research study, since Phillipson locates the development of a monolingual teaching approach in its historical and political context and exposes it as highly ideological in nature. The second tenet is also relevant, since the debate about whether native-speaker teachers are better, worse, or complementary to, non-native speaker teachers is still active (Medgyes 1983, 1992, 1994, Årva and Medgyes 2000, Braine 1999, Ellis 2002) as discussed in Chapter 3.1. The other tenet which has relevance here is number 5 – that standards will drop if other languages are used much. This has a bearing on the exclusion of the learners’ L1 from the adult ESL classroom, (discussed in Chapter 3.3 and in Chapter 8) and hence the perceived lack of relevance of the teacher’s knowledge of languages other than English.

Pennycook (1994) maintains that the discourse of ELT has been infused with ethnocentric notions of development and modernization, encouraging the notion that English language teachers going to work overseas are bringing advanced ideas to backward areas. This tendency has also been critiqued by Kachru (1985, 1995) and Hollliday (1994). The discourses of ELT have construed it as socially, culturally and politically neutral, and, increasingly, are construing it as located within a global market-oriented philosophy (Pennycook 1994:164).

At the same time these analyses of the profession and discourses of ELT show that it is dominant in a worldwide context, we also find the paradox that English language teachers do not enjoy high status, particularly outside state-funded school or development aid projects. Phillipson (1997a) refers to the marginal status of such teachers, and Kaplan (1997) and Nunan (2001) both question whether ELT is even a
profession, citing lack of agreed professional standards, the employment of unqualified native speakers, the lack of control teachers have over entry and standards compared to doctors and lawyers, and the lack of powerful advocacy of language teachers’ associations.

3.4.4 Pedagogies in ELT

Pedagogical methods in ELT tend to reflect a Western, liberal ‘humanistic’ view of education, although Pennycook (1994) points out that by labelling as ‘humanistic language teaching’ the kind of self-focussed activities inspired by popular psychology (eg: Moskowitz 1978), we are implicitly suggesting that other approaches are less than human. One effect of this is to reify the anglocentric approaches exported from the English-speaking countries to other countries with well-established localised approaches to education (Holliday 1994, Pennycook 1994, Kumaravadivelu 2001). Another effect is to frame the backward, traditional, quaint and misguided approaches of the recipient country as exoticised and ‘other’ (Said 1978). Other aspects of Western-approved pedagogical methods include the emphasis on student-centredness, the privileging of the development of oral skills over written skills, an informal relationship between teacher and students and an expectation that students will be self-motivated and willing to make decisions about their learning (Pennycook 1994). Tollefson (1991) refers to the ‘pragmatic paradox’ in which students in some ELT classrooms are placed: ordered by the teacher to ‘take control’ they are not really free to do so, since the teacher is truly in control, but neither are they free to disobey the teacher. Asked to discuss topics they may find inappropriate such as sexuality or religion, the students are not free to refuse to participate, as they would be in the ‘real life’ situation which communicative approaches try to emulate.

Holliday (1994), although he disagrees with Phillipson’s ‘linguistic imperialism’ thesis, saying it assumes a lack of agency on the part of those dominated, nevertheless sees a conflict between two halves of the ELT profession. On one hand are the perspectives and methods of the British, North American and Australasian model of education (BANA) and on the other those of state education in the rest of the world which he labels TESEP (tertiary, secondary, primary). Like Kachru, Pennycook and Kumaravadivelu, Holliday argues that the methods of BANA have been exported with little or no adaptation to the social, educational and historical realities of TESEP
societies. Widdowson (1992) points out that not only are such practices arrogant and ill-informed, but even ridiculous and embarrassing, since the BANA countries export ELT ‘experts’ with little training or expertise to train others in countries which have sophisticated traditions of linguistics and education. Moreover, he points out that there is a supreme irony in Britain professing expertise in second language teaching when as a nation its own citizens are such abject failures at language learning (Widdowson 1992, Peel 2001). Such a comment is resonant with a contention of this thesis, which is that the ELT profession sees itself purely as teaching *English* rather than as teaching *a second language*; with all the implications of the latter for the development of bilingualism, the role of the first language, the role of prior literacy and linguistic knowledge and the potential for contrastive, cross-lingual approaches. It is possible for Britain (and to a lesser extent, Australia) to see itself as the repository of all expertise in ELT because it is the fountainhead of *English*. The dismal record of both countries in second language learning (Edwards 1994, Smolicz 1995, Kirkpatrick 2000) is therefore invisible and irrelevant: a clear case of the ‘naturalization’ of a discourse (Fairclough 1989). In this case the discourse is one of monolingualism and native-speakerhood as the primary requirement of an English language teacher. Pennycook too recognises that: “The English language classroom, as idealized in the discourses of Western ELT theory, is not a place where languages can be freely used and exchanged but rather has come to reflect a dogmatic belief in a monolingualist approach to language learning” (Pennycook 1994:168).

In taking a critical approach to ELT pedagogical approaches, Norton (1997), Norton Peirce (1995), Auerbach and Burgess (1985) and Auerbach (1993, 1995) consider contexts which are closer to Australian ESL, in teaching ESL to adult immigrants in North America. Classes are composed, as in Australia, of mixed-language groups, thereby rendering a monolingual approach the naturalised norm. While in overseas contexts the failure of native-speaker ‘Centre’ teachers (Kachru 1995) to learn the local language is at least noted and commented on by some critics (Årva and Medgyes 2000, Widdowson 1997, Rossner 1987), in Australian and North American mixed-language groups it is assumed that since the teacher cannot speak all of the students’ languages, it follows that there is no benefit in the teacher knowing any second language. It is generally acknowledged, too, that if the teacher uses the one or two language(s) s/he *does* speak, then speakers of other languages in the class may feel ignored or disenfranchised, and this becomes another basis for the justification of English-only. As
A result, then, not only is the ESL classroom monolingual in method, but the teacher is either monolingual or expected to act as if s/he is monolingual, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Auerbach (1993) examines the practice of using English exclusively in the ESL class, and concludes that it is ideologically driven rather than pedagogically justified. She writes in the particular context of the US political movement known as ‘English-only’ (Crawford 1992) which includes widespread hostility to bilingual education, and so her conclusions are not all directly applicable to Australian ESL. However many of Auerbach’s arguments are applicable, such as the claim that even teachers who oppose ‘English-only’ policies at a political level tend to practise the exclusion of L1 in class. She comments that since the exclusion of L1 is an unnatural and counter-intuitive practice, teachers are forced into the schizophrenic position of disapproving of L1 but actually permitting it in a clandestine way. A parallel will be drawn between such practices and those of the Australian teachers in Chapter 8. Auerbach draws on Fairclough’s (1989) discussion of ideological power (see above) to explain the focus on English-only instruction. She questions current notions of expertise, noting that it is taken-for-granted that ESL teachers do not need to know their learners’ languages: “What counts is knowledge of English and second language theories, research, approaches and methods” (Auerbach 1993:25).

Auerbach and Burgess (1985) questioned the ubiquity of ‘survival’ ESL materials and concluded that they presented a sanitised, idealised version of reality which denies and trivialises the experience of adult immigrants, silencing them in the process. Auerbach (1995) further developed the idea of the exercise of ideological power in projecting particular practices as universal and ‘common sense’, calling for teachers and researchers to look at the TESOL classroom in a new light. She refers to Freire’s (1972, 1974) work on critical literacy and the need to bring learners’ lived experience into the curriculum. Norton (1997) compares theories of power and draws on Bourdieu’s (1977c, 1991) notion of ‘symbolic power’ and Weedon’s (1987) feminist poststructuralist work on the integration of language, individual experience and social power incorporated into a theory of subjectivity to attempt to provide an alternative to traditional SLA dichotomies of instrumental and integrative motivation. She argues that since her learners have multiply-constructed subjectivities, such simple and static explanations of their struggles to learn and use English as immigrants in an anglophone
society present only limited and largely unfavourable perspectives on the learners’ efforts. Further, such traditional perspectives of the learner as motivated or unmotivated, with or without aptitude, serve to obscure the role of powerful agencies in permitting or limiting access to both material benefits (jobs, housing, health cover) and symbolic power (the right to be heard or to have one’s language recognised). In other words, Norton (1997) (and Norton Peirce 1995) is arguing for the importance of framing language learning in an ESL context as a social process rather than simply a psycholinguistic process on the part of an individual. By opening up the question of social processes we can begin to see how issues of power, both coercive and ideological, impact on ESL learners.

This point brings us to a consideration of another critical perspective by those authors who critique the discipline of second language acquisition (SLA) for focussing too much on a monolingual, native-speaking individual. Sridhar (1994) and Kachru (1994) both refer to the monolingual bias in SLA research, claiming that it is a result of constraint by powerful Western cultural premises, or what Fairclough (1992, 1995) might call ‘naturalized discourses’. Sridhar (1994) claims among others things that SLA ignores the following: that L2 is typically used alongside L1 rather than replacing it; more SLA takes place in non-native than in native contexts; there are vast traditions of the acquisition of second languages other than English in multilingual societies, and that increasing amounts of world communication takes place in speakers’ second, third or fourth languages. Kachru (1994) calls for a re-evaluation of the key notions of native speaker, competence and fossilisation to show how they result from a monolingual bias in SLA research. She claims, like Sridhar (1994), that the field of SLA has ignored questions of language acquisition in bi- and multilingual settings, particularly in its pursuit of the idea of interlanguage (Selinker 1972), and most notably in its failure to distinguish interlanguage behaviour from examples of multilingual competence where code-switching to non-standard varieties may be a reflection of a number of social features of the interaction (Kachru 1994).

3.4.5 Directions

There is vigorous debate about some of the key notions discussed here, as evidenced by the ongoing arguments about whether the concept of linguistic imperialism has any validity or not. Examples of such debate are those between Canagarajah (1999b, 1999c)
and Rajagopalan (1999a, 1999b), and between Phillipson (1992a, 1997a, 1997b) and Davies (1996, 1997), essentially a debate about structure and agency, and about whether ‘critical applied linguistics’ is a legitimate concept (Pennycook 1999, Davies 1999) or whether it is a case of ‘misapplied linguistics’ or of ‘hypocritical linguistics’ (Widdowson 2000). Despite the existence of these debates, there is a growing recognition that English teaching as it has been practised over the past half century cannot be accepted without question, (Kachru 1995) and numerous writers are calling for a critical re-evaluation of ELT/TESOL. According to one author, it is now possible to research TESOL only from a critical perspective (Ramanathan 2003), suggesting that she sees little benefit in continuing to research within the existing paradigms. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) see two possible paradigms for language policy in a worldwide context: a diffusion of English paradigm, and an ecology of language paradigm. The first implies the kind of linguistic imperialism Phillipson (1992a, 1992b) has decried elsewhere and the second implies the promotion of language diversity, multilingualism and linguistic human rights. A closer focus on ELT is offered by Kumaravadivelu (2001) who argues that language teaching has been narrowly focussed on the concept of ‘method’. He proposes a postmethod pedagogy which has three dimensions: a pedagogy of particularity, practicality and possibility. Particularity means taking into account local linguistic, sociocultural and political factors, practicality means aiming for a teacher-generated theory of practice, and possibility recalls the teaching of Freire (1974) in challenging accepted relations of power and dominance. Kumaravadivelu welcomes the renewed focus on the complex issues of teacher knowledge (which will be reviewed in Chapter 3.5), but argues that they mainly focus on particularity and practicality. Without a focus on possibility, he warns that teacher development will remain sociopolitically naïve. If teachers are encouraged to reflect on their personal biographies and personal theories without connecting them to broader historical and sociopolitical questions, a shallow and self-perpetuating form of ‘development’ will result (Kumaravadivelu 2001:549).

Pennycook too sees the need for a ‘critical pedagogy’ which he attempts to locate within an overall framework of ‘critical applied linguistics’ (Pennycook, forthcoming). He explains that taking a critical approach to TESOL is not simply introducing a critical element into a classroom, but involves an attitude, a way of thinking and a way of teaching (Pennycook 1999). Critical theory is ultimately about problematizing accepted beliefs and practices, and refusing to accept official accounts of how things came to be
as they are (Pennycook 1999). This position is a justification for the focus of the present study. Teacher language experience and language proficiency has become invisible in ESL as well as more generally in ELT, and this study attempts to discover some of the official accounts of why this may be the case, as well as to critique them and expose them as ‘naturalised discourses’.

The most relevant aspects of the critical work reviewed above are expressed in the following points:

- the issues of teacher second language proficiency and teacher second language learning experience have received no attention in ELT
- this absence is itself little remarked upon
- ambivalent attitudes to learners’ first languages appear to be common among ESL teachers
- there may be connections between the monolingualist discourses described above and the way the Australian ESL profession has been structured and is now practised

With these issues in mind, Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 will describe the findings of the study. The final chapter will attempt to link the findings to the literature which has been reviewed in all the sections of this chapter, employing a critical framework in order to attempt to answer the research questions.
3.5 Teacher cognition: Teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about second language learning and ESL

Elbaz (1981) asserted that teachers’ feelings, values, needs and beliefs combined with experience, theoretical knowledge, and folklore guide their instructional practice. (Golombek 1998:448)

The main theoretical field which underpins the discussion of the teachers’ knowledge base is that of teacher cognition. This was first studied in the general field of education, and that literature is briefly discussed, before considering more recent work which has looked at teacher cognition in second language teacher education and development. Attempts to establish an agreed knowledge base for teachers of a second language are described, and there follows a review of research which has focussed on the contribution of language learning experience as part of teachers’ knowledge. Finally, a comparison is made between what Australian ESL teachers are currently expected to know, and what they might know as a result of particular language backgrounds.

3.5.1 Teacher cognition studies in general education

One of the first major reviews of the then relatively new field of teacher cognition (Shavelson and Stern 1981) maintained that research on the thought processes of teachers rests on the assumption that teachers are rational professionals who make judgements and decisions in an uncertain and complex environment. This view differs from that prevailing in previous decades of research which focussed on teachers’ observable behaviour and implied a view of teachers as technicians who act by putting their training into practice (Shavelson and Stern 1981). Since a teacher’s actions are determined by his or her thoughts, they argue, understanding the link becomes crucial to any serious understanding of teaching and teachers. In a further important review article several years on, Clark and Peterson (1986) proposed three major categories of teachers’ thought processes: teacher planning, teachers’ interactive thoughts and decisions and teachers’ theories and beliefs. It is the third category of teachers’ theories and beliefs which is most relevant to this study, since it “…represents the rich store of
knowledge that teachers have…” (Clark and Peterson 1986:258) which derive from a variety of sources and which forms the basis of their internal resources for planning and conducting their teaching. Two earlier small-scale studies proved to be tremendously influential in shifting the research from what teachers do to what teachers think, or in other words to describing teachers’ “mental lives” (Walberg 1977). The first was Jackson’s (1968) *Life in Classrooms*, a description of the mental constructs and processes upon which teacher behaviour is based. The second was Lortie’s (1975) *Schoolteacher* – an in-depth study of the sociology of teaching which contributed much to an understanding of, among other things, the complexity of the thinking of teachers. Lortie’s views on the role of experience in the formation of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs will be considered in more depth below. Fang (1996) conducted a more recent review of research on teacher beliefs and practices in general education, and examined the theoretical underpinnings of teacher cognition research. He cites research which shows that ESL teachers have clearly defined theoretical beliefs which are realised in a specific methodological approach (Johnson 1992). He outlines several directions for future research, of which the most germane for this thesis is a call for alternative research methods which should include:

…life history…narrative…or autobiography… to examine teachers’ thought processes. These methods focus on the participants’ own narratives…Such studies should lead to improved understanding of the complex and interrelated processes of personal experiences, beliefs and practices (Fang 1996:60).

Fang thereby acknowledges an increasing research interest in the emic perspectives of practitioners themselves, and lays the groundwork for studies such as the present one which explores teachers’ language biographies and their classroom stories in an attempt to uncover their knowings and beliefs about language learning and teaching.

### 3.5.2 Teacher cognition studies in second language teacher education

It was not until the early 1990s that teacher cognition research in general education began to find its way into the field of language teacher education (Binnie-Smith 1996, Borg 2003), and it has gradually gathered momentum. The cognition which is under discussion has been variously termed ‘teacher knowledge’ (Freeman 2002), ‘teachers’ mental lives’ (Walberg 1977), ‘teacher beliefs’ (Burns 1992, Richards 1998), beliefs,
attitudes and knowledge (Woods 1996), ‘conceptions of teaching’ (Freeman and Richards 1993), ‘conceptions of practice’ (Freeman 1996a), ‘teachers’ maxims’ (Richards 1998), ‘teachers’ pedagogical systems’ (Borg 1998), ‘teachers’ theories’ (Borg 1999b) and ‘teachers’ personal theories’ (James 2001). In a recent review, Borg (2003) identifies sixteen such terms for teacher cognition which have been in use over the past decade.

A sub-field of teacher cognition (Andrews forthcoming) is that which looks at what teachers know about language systems, and this is variously termed ‘teacher metalinguistic awareness or TMA’ (Andrews 1999), ‘language awareness’ (Hawkins 1999, Wright and Bolitho 1997, James 1992, 1999), ‘teacher language awareness’ (Thornbury 1997), ‘linguistic awareness’, ‘knowledge about language’ (abbreviated as KAL) and ‘metalinguistic awareness’ (James 1999), and ‘research into ‘teachers’ beliefs about, and understanding of, language’ (Brumfit 1997). The examinations by James (1992, 1999), Hawkins and to a lesser extent Brumfit are concerned with the language awareness of a broad range of teachers: those of all school subjects and teachers of English as a mother tongue, as well as teachers of second or foreign languages. The others cited here have a narrower focus on teachers of English as a second or foreign language.

Richards and Nunan (1990) called for an increased focus on the education and development of second language teachers which would focus on the teacher rather than the learner, take an ‘emic’ or insider perspective and take into account the complexity of teachers’ thought processes, beliefs and knowledge. This focus on the teacher is itself relatively new. The past half century of research in second language learning and teaching has been characterised by three main foci, the first being the examination and comparison of various teaching methods, which was a major concern up to the 1970s. From that time a new research direction came to the fore, which was a focus on the learner, learner language and individual differences, and this led to an interest in classroom-based research such as that in discourse analysis and teacher-student interaction (Woods 1996). Woods goes on to say that an important gap in the study of second language development is how it is perceived and interpreted by teachers themselves. Freeman and Richards (1996a, 1996b) argue that to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers, including how they think and what they know.
Specifically, we need to understand more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practice, and how that knowledge and those thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job (Freeman and Richards 1996b:1).

This sentiment is echoed by James (2001) and also by Freeman (2001), who argues that as teachers are the major mediators of what and how students learn, understanding how teachers think and work will, by informing teacher education, lead to an improvement in student learning.

There is an underdeveloped literature on the “personal, biographical and historical aspects of teaching which locates the teachers’ lives in a wider contextual understanding” (Goodson 1992a:234). Goodson is here writing about teachers of all subjects, but work on the personal and biographical aspects of ESOL teachers is even less developed (Hayes 1996).

Empirical studies which attempt to link teachers’ belief systems to their practice include the following. Cho (1990) reviewed the broad literature on teacher beliefs and was unable to find any studies in this area which related to ESL teaching, bearing out later statements to the same effect. Using videotapes of classes, stimulated recall and interviews she found a close link between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practice in the areas of grammar instruction, correction, communicative practice, and expectations of students’ success. Burns (1992) in a study of Australian ESL teachers of beginner students found a complex network of teacher beliefs clustered around five focus areas which appeared to influence their practice in this context. Of those five, the areas of most interest for this study were:

- the nature of language as it relates to beginning language learning;
- the nature of beginning language learning and the strategies relevant to language learning at this stage; and
- learners, their ability to learn and their ability to learn English.

The teachers’ verbalisations showed the complex interplay between beliefs and decisions which lies behind overt classroom actions, and Burns maintains that these beliefs normally remain hidden and implicit (Burns 1992). Gutierrez Almarza (1996)
describes a ten-month longitudinal study of four teacher trainees learning to teach foreign languages, including the interaction between their pre-training knowledge and their knowledge derived from teacher education. She points out that teacher trainees come not only with the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie 1975, Bailey et al. 1996) but also with “their own informal language learning experiences to which they attach different meanings. If this is so, it is rather surprising that teacher training courses do little to make this experiential perspective explicit” (Gutierrez Almarza 1996:51).

Freeman and Richards have been two of the key researchers into teacher beliefs in language teacher education, both separately and as co-authors (Richards and Nunan 1990, Freeman 1992, Freeman and Richards 1993, Freeman 1994, Freeman and Richards 1996a, 1996b, Freeman 1996a, 1996b, Richards 1998, Freeman 2001, Freeman 2002). Freeman’s main concern has been with broadening the understanding of what he terms the ‘hidden side of teaching’, or teachers’ mental lives (Freeman 2002). In 1992 he argued for an understanding of teaching as being an integration of thought and action, and maintained that teacher education should be built on experience and reflection (Freeman 1992).

An important shift in perspective began in the early 1990s, when researchers and teacher educators began to ask “…what [do] language teachers need to know in order to do their work? How is language teaching learned? And what is the basis in experience and knowledge from which language teaching proceeds?” (Freeman and Richards 1996b:ix). Freeman has since refined these questions to propose two clusters of research issues: one concerning teacher knowledge and one concerning teacher learning (Freeman 2001). As he points out, they are of course connected, since one cannot discuss how teachers should learn without some idea of what they should learn. Nor can a discussion of what teachers know ignore how they might have come by that knowledge (Freeman 2002). However the two perspectives are useful since they permit us to ask questions which have largely remained unexplored, such as:

- How is ESOL teacher knowledge formed both over time and in particular settings?
- How in turn, does such knowledge shape classroom practices?
- How do teachers’ prior knowledge and experience shape new professional learning?
• What is the role of subject matter knowledge (e.g., applied linguistics and English language proficiency) in instruction?
• What do ESOL teachers need to know about language in general and English in particular in order to teach? (Freeman 2001:609).

A great deal of this literature on teacher cognition including Freeman’s work focusses on two main themes: what teachers know, and need to know, in order to do their work, and secondly how teachers learn. The focus on teacher learning is largely driven by those teacher educators who are seeking better and more effective models for teacher education. For the present study, which is concerned with investigating the role which prior language learning plays in the knowledge base of ESL teachers, it is the first of these which is of main interest. If language learning experience is found to be an important part of a teacher’s knowledge, then of course there are implications for initial teacher education and ongoing professional development, but at this point the question of how teachers learn, which much of the literature considers, is secondary for the purposes of this thesis, since the focus is on what teachers know and believe.

I shall now move to a description of how various authors have attempted to define the kinds of ‘knowledge’ which ESL teachers need.

3.5.3 Establishing the knowledge base of ESL teachers

There have been numerous attempts at defining the knowledge base of teachers in general, language teachers in general and ESL teachers in particular, and a distinction which has been commonly made and is still used is that between ‘content knowledge’ and ‘procedural knowledge’ (Woods 1996). The debate is complicated by the fact that language, as well as being an object of study in a variety of educational contexts, is also a real-world phenomenon which can be learned ‘naturally’ without schooling (Freeman 1994).

Widdowson (1997) points out that until the early twentieth century, content knowledge was thought to be sufficient for all teachers, so a teacher of English or of German needed only to be an expert on the structure and use of the language. Ability to convey this knowledge to students was taken for granted, and hence this perspective became known as a ‘transmission’ approach to teaching. Later a realization that teaching did not
equal learning focussed attention on the how of teaching, or procedural knowledge. Widdowson (1997) also argues that a focus on the procedural has all but obliterated the focus on content knowledge in recent years in ESOL.

Shulman (1987), writing about education in general also talked of content and procedural knowledge, but argued that subject matter knowledge (ie. content) held by an expert in the field is different from that held by a teacher. This distinction is clear if we consider an expert biologist versus a biology teacher, but less so if we consider a ‘language expert’ versus a language teacher. Is a language expert simply a native speaker, or a linguist who can describe the technical aspects of language structure?

Again we see the complexity of language as both a subject and a real-world phenomenon referred to above (Freeman 1994), and we are drawn to the question asked (but as yet unanswered) by Widdowson: “Is there anything distinctive about second language learning?” (Widdowson 1997:126). Certainly it can be argued that ESL as it is currently taught is distinctive, since English is both the object of study and the medium of teaching.

Woods’ (1996) seminal study of teacher development devotes a good deal of space to considerations of the knowledge base of ESL teachers, and the framework he uses comprises the notions of teachers’ knowledge, (declarative and procedural), assumptions and beliefs, which he abbreviates as BAK. He introduces this notion as: “… a hypothetical concept of an integrated network of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge” (Woods 1996:185, emphasis in the original).

He describes ‘assumptions’ as including assumptions about language, assumptions about language learning and assumptions about language teaching. He discusses the numerous ways in which the terms ‘knowledge and beliefs’ have been used in the literature, and argues that in practical terms it is not possible to differentiate between what a teacher knows, believes, or believes s/he knows (Woods 1996:194). He concurs with Freeman (1994) in saying that attempting to distinguish between declarative (content) knowledge and procedural knowledge when we are dealing with language is complex (Woods 1996:193). He ultimately defends his introduction of the concept of BAK as being an attempt to simplify the plethora of previous representations, as highlighting the interrelated and interdependent nature of its composite parts, and as primarily useful in attempting to work out how BAK is used in teacher decision-making.
Freeman (1994) makes a distinction between ‘disciplinary knowledge’ and ‘teaching knowledge’ (paralleling Woods’ (1996) ‘declarative’ and ‘procedural’), which both shape what teachers know and therefore what they do. Vélez-Rendón (2002) acknowledges that there is no consensus on the issue but concurs with the earlier authors in finding ‘subject matter knowledge’ (content) and ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ (procedure) a useful distinction. Leung and Teasdale (1998) argue that teacher competence is not a value-free concept, and review a number of international approaches to defining it.

Some authors have taken a more specific line in attempting to document, in more of a curriculum approach, what the knowledge base of language teachers and/or ESL teachers should consist of. Richards (1998), for example, a key writer in second language teacher education, proposes six domains of content, although it should be noted that his term ‘content’ includes what other authors call ‘procedural’ or ‘pedagogical’ knowledge. His six domains are:

- theories of teaching
- teaching skills
- communication skills
- subject matter knowledge: “the specialized concepts, theories, and disciplinary knowledge that constitute the theoretical basis for the field of second language teaching (Richards 1998:8)
- pedagogical reasoning skills
- contextual knowledge (societal, community and institutional factors).

The most pertinent for the present discussion is ‘subject matter knowledge’, and Richards gives two sample goals in this area:

To understand the nature of language and language use, particularly pedagogically based descriptions of the nature of second language learning.

To understand the nature of second language learning (Richards 1998:15)

Grabe et al. (2000) acknowledge that exactly the same body of knowledge cannot be prescribed for all teachers, but propose four main strands of knowledge which will “support more thoughtful and reflective teachers” (Grabe et al. 2000:179). First of these is linguistic knowledge, within which they claim it is essential that teachers understand how language is both the means and the medium for learning and understanding. This
claim recalls Halliday’s statement that we learn language itself, we learn about language and we learn through language (Halliday 1991). The other three strands of disciplinary knowledge they outline are psychology, (for example learner differences, motivation, research on learning) anthropology (eg communicative competence, linguistic relativity) and education (for example learning theory, teaching practice, action research).

James (2001) examines teachers’ professional skills under the headings of subject matter skills, methodological skills, decision-making skills, social skills and enabling skills. He devotes little time to subject matter skills, which he characterises as “…language competence or the use of the target language in class” (James 2001:5), pointing readers instead to texts which aim to develop linguistic analysis skills (Thornbury 1997). This in itself suggests that James sees subject matter skills in relation only to the language being taught, rather than to language in general or to two or more languages.

This emphasis on knowledge of the language being taught is also found in the writings of Andrews (forthcoming), Brumfit (1997) and James (1999) who are concerned with the level of linguistic awareness (LA) of trainee and practising teachers. Andrews acknowledges that important subject matter knowledge includes aspects of culture and context, discourse, variety, change and power as well as grammar. However he confines his own discussion to teachers’ knowledge of language systems, believing them to be at the heart of teachers’ subject matter knowledge (Andrews, forthcoming). Brumfit (1997) takes a broader view, mentioning teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about language, language acquisition, the role of language in society, language in learning and language in power structures as being important parts of teachers’ knowledge base. He also points out that ESL/EFL teachers intersect the division between FL teachers and English (as a mother tongue) teachers, and that “their culture awaits its ethnographer…How teachers operate as educational linguists must reflect their views of language in learning that have received virtually no empirical investigation” (Brumfit 1997:170).

### 3.5.4 Knowledge derived from experience

A recurrent theme in discussions of ‘what teachers should know’ is that of ‘experiential knowledge’. One of the earliest appearances of this idea was in Lortie’s (1975)
sociological examination of the teaching profession mentioned briefly earlier. One important contribution of this work was Lortie’s elucidation of the concept of the ‘apprenticeship of observation’, by which he means the 13,000 hours most teachers have spent, as students, observing other teachers during their schooling. This concept has struck a chord with present-day teacher educators (Bailey et al 1996, Bailey and Nunan 1996, Bailey et al. 2001, Vélez-Rendón 2002) since it raises the question of how effective teacher education can be when competing with powerful ideas and beliefs which have formed over the years of schooling. A feature of Lortie’s work which is often not highlighted, however, is that he maintained that the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ has important limitations in its transferability into teaching. While students undoubtedly have a heavy investment in the teaching they receive, they see it from a particular student vantage point and are unable to appreciate the reasons and judgements behind teachers’ actions. Their evaluations of teachers and teaching lack a sense of the difficulties and of the skills involved, and therefore do not, Lortie argues, lead to informed criticism (Lortie 1975:63). Nonetheless, there is general agreement that this “apprenticeship” causes strong imprints, likes, dislikes, beliefs and expected patterns of behaviour to be set up which can be hard to dislodge through formal teacher training (Gutierrez Almarza 1996). These imprints tend to function as “de facto guides” particularly for new teachers as they approach the classroom (Freeman 1992:3). Clearly teachers need not simply reproduce the way they were taught, but can re-think it in the light of training, later experience, varied challenges and professional development. For this to take place, though, it is essential that teachers know their own histories and examine them critically. The “apprenticeship of observation” will affect our beliefs and actions to the degree and in the ways which we permit (Bailey et al 1996). This statement leads us to the notion of reflective practice examined below. Other authors who stress the importance of knowledge derived from experience include Cumming (1989) who maintains that:

…the kinds of practical knowledge which teachers use in teaching appear to exist largely in very personal terms, based on unique experiences, individual conceptions and their interactions with local contexts. It tends to have a personal significance which differs from prescribed models of educational theory. (Cumming 1989:46-7)

Binnie-Smith (1996) in a study of the link between nine ESL teachers’ beliefs and practices found that the way in which teachers combine theoretical ideas relates directly
to their personal beliefs and what their experience informs them is productive in the classroom. Freeman (2002) reinforces the notion of this ‘personal, practical knowledge’ (Clandinin and Connelly 1987, Golombek 1998) stressing that personal and social history are interwoven in teachers’ thinking, and that “context…assumes a virtual dimension through the socializing power of the teacher’s past and present experiences….” (Freeman 2002:7). Freeman also argues that the main challenge for teachers is to find meaning in experience, and to do this, reflective practice must become the central pillar in teacher education (Freeman 2002:11).

This focus on experience as a key contributor to teachers’ knowledge and thinking processes has led some authors to consider the different possible sources of knowledge. Schön’s (1983, 1995) discussion of the difference between “research-based theories and techniques” and “knowing-in-action” has been enormously influential in the field of adult education. He developed the concept of the ‘reflective practitioner’ (Schön 1983, 1995) and has elaborated how reflection is a necessary part of educating and developing professionals (Schön 1987). This notion is now firmly established in the literature on second language teacher education (Freeman 2002, McKay 2002). Wallace (1991) reconsidered Schön’s notions, and finds the distinction between types of knowledge useful but in need of modification for language teachers. He proposes the term “received knowledge” for two reasons: first that not all the ‘knowledge’ language teacher trainees are expected to acquire is based on research, but is often speculative, and second that it echoes the widely-accepted phrase “received wisdom”, meaning that which is commonly accepted without proof or question (Wallace 1991:12). He contrasts ‘received knowledge’ with ‘experiential knowledge’ which he defines as “…knowledge-in-action by practice of the profession, and [the trainee] will have had, moreover, the opportunity to reflect on that knowledge-in-action” (Wallace 1991:15). He goes on to propose a reflective model for teacher education in which both received and experiential knowledge lead to practice, and through reflection, to professional competence, with the important feature that the practice-reflection stages are continuous and cyclical. Freeman too contends that it is widely accepted that within subject-matter knowledge: “…contexts of place – the classroom in particular - profoundly shape what teachers know, so that knowledge derived from academic disciplines and knowledge from classroom experience are distinct…” (Freeman, 1996b:359).
A similar distinction to that of Wallace (1991) is made by Freeman and Johnson (1998) who distinguish between two categories of the knowledge-base of language teachers: grounded and a priori. ‘Grounded’ knowledge is based on classroom practice and ‘a priori’ knowledge refers to received academic knowledge. Widdowson (1997) alludes to the shift in emphasis in teacher education which views practice as being capable of generating theory, rather than theory leading directly to practice. This is another way of saying that teachers’ experience is at least as valuable and as strategically useful as the academic input they receive on training courses. Gutierrez Almarza (1996) states that knowledge which comes from personal experience is richer and different in quality from the knowledge gained in formal courses, and this recalls Wallace’s (1991) distinction between ‘received’ and ‘experiential’ knowledge.

The literature discussed above, then, demonstrates a growing interest in how teachers’ mental lives affect their conceptions of teaching (Freeman 1993) and hence their practice. There have been many efforts to establish what the knowledge base of language teaching, and ESL teaching specifically, is and should be, but there is as yet no consensus on this. There is, however, fairly broad agreement that teachers bring a wide range of resources to their classroom practice, and the sources of these are “received knowledge” from academic learning, and “experiential knowledge” from prior classroom experience (Wallace 1991). I would argue that this distinction is an extremely valuable one for investigating the present question, but that limiting “experiential knowledge” to classroom experience is far too restrictive. Many authors refer to the rich personal and educational histories which teachers bring to their work (James 2001, Vélez-Rendón 2002) but acknowledge that little work has as yet been done in exploring these and examining their influence on the formation of teacher beliefs. There has been an emphasis on classroom teaching experience (Wallace 1991, Mackay 2002), or on general learning experience (Lortie 1975, Stern 1983). The statements within the ESL profession which establish necessary teacher competencies and which were reviewed in Chapter 2 include many aspects of teacher knowledge, but so far do not distinguish between received knowledge and experiential knowledge. Yet the studies reviewed in the next section show that there is some recognition within ESL and EFL that language learning experience has a role to play in the formation of teachers’ professional knowledge. This thesis, however, argues that the issue has not so far been adequately theorized, and still less incorporated into teacher education, development and employment.
3.5.5 Research on language learning experience in teacher education

Freeman (1992, 1996) has written consistently about the need to include the complexity of teachers’ prior lives in our conception of ‘experience’, but Bailey et al. (1996) is one of very few who have focussed on the role of previous language learning experience. Gutierrez Almarza (1996) expresses surprise that teacher education has focussed so little on the informal language learning background of trainees. Even where authors have acknowledged the value of past language learning experience and/or L2 proficiency, there is a curious tendency to downplay it. Birch (1992), for example, pre-facing his discussion of a structured language learning experience, (see Chapter 3.5.6), says that:

One of the important kinds of knowledge that may inform the practice of second language teaching concerns the nature of language learning………Most second language teachers have some personal experience of learning another language, but often it was undertaken well before they became second language teachers and their memories of the experience are too hazy to be reliable as a guide to second language learning processes (Birch 1992:287).

Grabe et al. (2000) mention L2 learning only as a sub-set of the discipline of psychology, as part of research into learning theory, and recently, the nature of expertise:

“Because learning a second language to a level of high proficiency can be viewed as a type of expertise, this field raises many interesting ideas for language learning, teacher reflection and curriculum assessment” (Grabe et al. 2000:185).

The above quotation constitutes the authors’ only words on the topic. In discussing the teacher’s multiple roles in conducting learner strategy training, Cohen (1992) devotes a mere paragraph to the role of ‘teacher as language learner’. He states that:

…if…teachers themselves are willing and able to put themselves in the role of language learning, they most likely will become more acutely aware of the kinds of challenges and problems that confront the learners….Some prominent teacher
training programs actually require of their students that they take a semester or more of a target language… (Cohen 1992:249) (emphasis added)

Cohen’s brief words on the subject suggest that language learning experiences are relatively rare, and that requiring teachers to learn a language, even for a short time, may be an imposition (“if…they are willing and able …. actually require…”). Perhaps more importantly, there is an unquestioned assumption that teachers are expected to rely solely on received knowledge when teaching learners how to develop and use effective learning strategies, now a key part of most TESOL curricula (Moir and Nation 2002). In other words, it is deemed perfectly acceptable for teachers to say to learners, in effect, “Although I have never learned another language, I am going to teach you the best ways of learning another language”. Where teachers have learned one or more other languages, there is still little recognition here of the value this may have in informing and refining their teaching of learning strategies. The idea of experiential knowledge is here marginalized.

Those who call for the establishment of a knowledge base of second language teaching are silent on whether the kinds of knowledge they call for can be acquired on the basis of one language alone. For example, Richards (1998) discussed above, calls for teachers to “understand the nature of language and language use…” and to “understand the nature of second language learning” (Richards 1998:15).

We need to ask whether a monolingual teacher can acquire these understandings to the same extent as a teacher who has learned a second language. We can speculate that both have access to received knowledge from academic courses and from reading, and experiential knowledge (Wallace 1991) derived from classroom teaching experience, but that only the bilingual will have access to experiential knowledge derived from his or her own language learning experience. While this question does not appear to have been addressed in the literature, there is some evidence that reflection on language learning experience is seen by some as a valuable tool in teacher education and development, as discussed in the following section.
3.5.6 The structured language learning experience (LLE) as a teacher development tool

With only a couple of exceptions, the studies which have been conducted on the value of teachers examining their own language learning have been based on structured language learning experiences (LLEs) – single lessons or short courses introduced into a teacher training or development program, for the express purpose of encouraging reflection on the process of language learning.

Lowe (1987) reports on a project which involved EFL teachers in London studying a 12-week course in Mandarin. The objective of the course was “…to give teachers a chance to renew their connection with language learning, and thereby to become more sensitive to the problems and processes confronting their learners” (Lowe 1987:89). He found that participants reported insights relating to learning strategies as well as to affective and cognitive factors which caused them to re-assess their own teaching practice. The introductory training courses which evolved at Lowe’s site (International House, London) and developed into what is now the worldwide CILTS scheme, have long incorporated an LLE in an attempt to place trainees ‘in the learners’ shoes’ and to encourage them to reflect on the experience. However, perhaps because LLEs are not a stipulated part of the CILTS curriculum, there appear to be no published evaluations of them. Waters et al. (1990) report on an LLE which formed an integral part of several teacher development programs at Lancaster University. They outline eight objectives of the LLE, of which the primary one is the opportunity for participants to reflect on language learning from a student perspective. They also list six pitfalls of such a program, largely to do with how the trainees see its purpose, and whether or how they are able to extrapolate insights from it which are relevant to their home teaching situation.

A Language Learning Case Study formed part of a PG Dip. in Applied Linguistics at Griffith University in Brisbane in 1989/1990, and involved students completing a residence in Thailand during which they taught English and learnt Thai (Birch 1992). The author concludes that the LLCS was invaluable experience for the trainee teachers, providing them with the opportunity to reflect on such issues as culture shock, expectations of teaching styles, fluency and accuracy, use of the first language in class and learning in a second (as opposed to foreign) language context. Birch points out that
all these issues were familiar to the students from the theory component of the course, but that:

These notions took on a new significance in the light of their Thailand experience…what the Thai project had done was to add a dimension of personal experience … with the effect of concentrating their thoughts on the examination of the various facets of common issues. (Birch 1992:294)

This comment highlights the distinction between received and experiential knowledge referred to above. Fister-Stoga and Iwata (1992) report on a LLE experience involving one lesson in Polish as part of a teacher education workshop offered in Japan, and again one of the main aims was to foster a learner-centred perspective. Bell’s (1995) paper comes at the issue from a different angle. Her aim was self-development, specifically trying to enlarge her understanding of the development of L2 literacy through an autobiographical study of her acquisition of Chinese literacy (Bell 1995). She reports her lack of ability to come to terms with a very different notion of what literacy means, and even an inability to see that different notions were involved at all. She found the experience, over several months, highly stressful “….and [I] can only imagine the effect on those with less support (than I had)” (Bell 1995:687). Here again, the idea of putting oneself in the learner’s shoes as a teacher development mechanism is the central theme.

Bailey et al. (1996), instead of focussing on an ‘imposed’ LLE as did the studies cited above, conducted a collaborative study whereby participant researchers wrote and analysed their own language learning autobiography in order to investigate their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie 1975) and to find out how it had shaped their teaching philosophies and practices. Among several conclusions they reach is one that although it may seem that history repeats itself and we teach as we were taught, in fact “…conscious knowledge of our histories may help us to overcome the tendency to imitate, unwittingly, the behaviour of others” (Bailey et al. 1996:16). There are two implications from Bailey et al. (1996) which are important for the present study: firstly that powerful imprints are made by previous good or bad language learning experience, and secondly, that the teacher will only be able to develop teaching beliefs based on a rational consideration of the options if these hidden imprints are brought to the fore – that is talked about, written about, and critically reflected upon. Otherwise these powerful but hidden personal experiences will interact with ‘received knowledge’
(Wallace 1991) from formal teacher education and will affect practice in ways which are unexamined.

Campbell (1996) conducted an autobiographical study on her own experiences as a beginning language learner in Mexico, and focussed particularly on what she gained from socializing outside class time with the teachers. She then drew conclusions from this work about her own teaching experience, and suggested that teachers need to become familiar with each student’s prior language learning in order to help him or her to exploit previously successful strategies (Campbell 1996:221). Moran (1996) reports a case study of the route taken by a teacher of Spanish to becoming a teacher, which included several periods over years of learning Spanish both formally and informally. He discusses the ways in which her language learning and language teaching interacted in the development of her Spanish teaching self.

Flowerdew (1998) returns to the notion of using a structured LLE as part of a teacher development program in Hong Kong, in this case over a semester. The aims of the program were to develop insights into beginner language learning, to learn something of another language and to “relate and evaluate issues in language teaching theory in the light of their own experience as language learners” (Flowerdew 1998:530). Evaluation of the course suggested that the course indeed enabled trainees to see the learning process from the perspective of students and to integrate theoretical and experiential knowledge. A further outcome which was not mentioned in the earlier studies was that since all participants were bilingual in English and Cantonese, the linguistic and sociocultural elements of the target language could be contrasted with these two languages. This process was considered to make an important contribution to the participants’ overall language awareness as discussed by Hawkins (1984), Wright and Bolitho (1993) and Andrews (forthcoming). With the exception of Flowerdew’s (1998) study, insights gained about language from an LLE are rarely discussed. The main focuses of LLEs as a developmental tool are on how it feels to be a learner, the use of learning strategies, and reactions to teaching strategies.

In their text on the self as source in professional development, Bailey et al. (2001) devote one of thirteen chapters to the notion of role reversal through language learning experience. They see this as valuable in three ways: to understand the challenges faced by students, to better understand language and language use, and to help in developing
effective teaching strategies. This text is the realization of the earlier claim that it is essential that teachers reflect on their personal language learning histories in order to avoid unwitting repetition of the instruction they received as learners (Bailey et al. 1996).

McDonough (2002) describes the dissonance she found between herself as a language learner and herself as a language teacher, and speculates on the reasons for this. These include variations in learner preferences, the very different roles and focus that teachers and learners have, and the importance of context. She too acknowledges that the studies of teachers as learners are still very small in number (McDonough 2002) and that more case studies are needed.

Other instances of a language learning experience being used as a teacher development tool include Weed (1993), who teaches a mini-lesson in French as a way of exploring participants’ feelings and learning/coping strategies when faced with an unknown language. She reports doing this for teacher trainees, practising teachers and conference participants, with a variety of responses, from confusion to distress to hostility, but concludes that “…until trainees actually experience dealing with another language, they do not have a clear sense of what their own students may be facing” (Weed 1993:193). Ellis and Willcoxson (1994) used a short Japanese lesson as a teacher development tool with university teaching staff from a range of disciplines. Their purpose was to give academics, experts in their own discipline, the experience of their first year students entering a totally new learning environment where content and expectations were unknown. The debriefing session revealed that staff had gained new insights into students’ problems and confusion, and realised that:

… classroom behaviour previously seen by them as aberrant or unco-operative could be in fact a natural reaction to the stress of learning new and difficult subject matter in an environment where they were deprived of their normal resources for learning (Ellis and Willcoxson 1994:325).

Suarez (2002) describes a program whereby twenty-two ESOL teachers on an American MA program experienced ‘cultural otherness’ by living and studying Spanish in Venezuela for three weeks, thereby gaining insight into their students’ experiences.
While the above review of studies of a structured language learning experience (LLE) as a contributor to teachers’ knowledge does not claim to be exhaustive, it does include most of those studies found in a search of the second language learning literature over the past fifteen years. The small number of such studies bears out one of the central contentions of this thesis, that the prior language learning of ESL teachers has received very little attention.

I shall now summarise the studies described above as a whole to see what they tell us about work to date on exploring the value of language learning for ESL teachers. It seems clear from the authors’ reports that the structured language learning experience (LLE) is a valuable tool in teacher training and in-service development. All the reports claim outcomes of trainees’ increased empathy with learners and an increased understanding of their own assumptions about learning, and these are both essential elements of effective teaching (Boud and Griffin 1987). The LLEs are, however, limited in their usefulness by several features. They are for the most part short, ranging from a single lesson (Weed 1993, Fister-Stoga and Iwata 1992) to one semester’s part-time study (Flowerdew 1998, Lowe 1987) and in one case a year of weekly lessons (Bell 1995). They almost invariably involve foreign (rather than second) language learning, where the learner is not surrounded by the language and culture but has limited exposure to it, resulting in little threat to his or her identity and material survival. An exception is Birch’s (1992) students’ residency in Thailand, yet his students were part of a cohesive and supportive group, and were there only for a short sojourn, which minimised any such threat. All the LLEs involved the learning of a language at beginner level, restricting accordingly the possible insights derived therefrom. Most were based on formal classroom learning, with the exceptions of Bailey et al. (1996, prior language learning experience of any kind) and Campbell (1996, language learned through informal socializing). Participation in the LLE was always voluntary, except where it was a required strand of a course, but one could argue participation in the whole course was voluntary. The purpose of the LLE was always clear, and it was followed in each case by structured group reflection, or in the case of lone students (Campbell 1996, Bell 1995 and McDonough 2002), purposeful introspective reflection.

These observations are not intended as criticisms of structured experiences which were clearly of immense value as teacher development tools. Rather, the observations are intended to highlight the fact that the LLEs constitute a very limited and somewhat
simulated language learning experience compared to the variety and complexity of those possible in real life. They tend to be short, based on formal classroom teaching situations at beginner level, conducted with purposes other than the learning of the actual language, and posing little threat to the identity, academic success or material advancement of the learner. They focus almost exclusively on the ‘teacher-as-learner’ aspect, and, with the noteworthy exception of Flowerdew (1998), do not exploit the possibilities of the LLE to compare and contrast linguistic and extra-linguistic properties of the target language with English or others. They do not, or cannot, provoke insights into higher-level language learning, into the development of bilingualism in all its many forms, into the complex relationship between language and identity, into informal language learning, into successful language learning beyond a basic level, into complex linguistic and sociolinguistic comparisons, and a host of other aspects which lie outside the boundaries of the LLE as it is described here. Such LLEs are, in short, valuable but extremely limited, compared with the variety, complexity and richness of the real language learning experiences which many teachers bring to their work, as will be examined in Chapter 5.

3.5.7 Discussions of content knowledge and procedural knowledge desirable for ESL teachers

From the many ways in which teacher knowledge has been classified, I will for the moment take Woods’ (1996) distinction between declarative, or content knowledge (the ‘what’ of teaching) and procedural knowledge (the ‘how’ to teach it). As Woods (1996) admits, content knowledge is not easy to define unproblematically when the content is language, and still less easy when the content is also the medium of instruction, as in the adult ESL class. After discussion of the interrelated nature of declarative and procedural knowledge in the case of language teaching, he frames the issue with the following questions:

- what does the teacher need to know about language or language use in order to manage the learning of it effectively?
- furthermore, does it need to be known consciously? For example, is having native speaker intuitions about the language necessary or sufficient?
My main concern here then is to unravel what that content and procedural knowledge might be as it relates to language, language use, language learning and language teaching. Since the focus of this thesis is on the possible contribution of teachers’ language learning background to their knowledge and beliefs, I shall be attempting to outline only those aspects of their knowledge which might possibly differ between language backgrounds.

3.5.7.1 Content knowledge

In the field of ESL, content knowledge is clearly the teacher’s knowledge of the English language. However there are two main aspects of this content knowledge, which are that ESL teachers need to be both proficient users and skilled analysts of the English language (Wright and Bolitho 1997). So the two aspects of necessary content knowledge are:

(a) the teacher’s ability to speak and write English as a competent user and
(b) the teacher’s knowledge of English from an analytical perspective: its phonology, grammar, syntax, lexical properties, generic structures, pragmatic realizations and literacy conventions.

I would suggest however that there is a further dimension to content knowledge in which the ESL teacher differs slightly from any other teacher. This dimension is:

(c) the teacher’s knowledge/experience of the acquisition of the content in formal contexts

Here the content could be considered to be ‘English’, or to be ‘a second language’. This is in fact a crucial distinction. If (c) were considered essential by the profession, and the content is seen as English, then the profession would be composed entirely of non-native speaker teachers – an unlikely and indefensible proposition. However, if we take the second meaning, of knowledge arising from having formally learned the content, seen as ‘a second language’, then it brings us to the contention of this thesis, which is that it may be valuable for all teachers to have such knowledge. Non-native speakers have it by definition, and some native speaker teachers have it.
Why, though, should we consider it necessary or desirable for content knowledge to include knowledge/experience of having learned the content? A parallel from a subject area other than language may help to make this proposition clearer. If we consider a teacher of biology, s/he must have acquired knowledge about biology as a learner in order to teach it. S/he may have learned it a long time ago, in very a different educational context, but s/he has essentially travelled the same route as his or her students, going from a state of knowing little of the subject matter to a state of expertise in it. S/he will also have learned it formally, after early childhood, when there is a strong likelihood that the experience of learning is at least potentially accessible for reflection. It is not possible to have biology-as-a-first-language, so the content has inevitably been learned in a conscious way.

Now let us consider the ESL teacher. S/he will have learned English either as a first language, and be a native speaker (NS), or will have learned it as a second language, and be a non-native speaker (NNS). The latter usually supposes that the second language was learned post-early childhood since any earlier usually leads speakers to classify themselves as NS (Davies 2003). If the teacher is a native speaker of English, s/he has learned it in a qualitatively different way from the way in which his or her adult students are learning it. This teacher’s learning of English as a first language took place in early childhood, is unavailable for reflection and is considered by SLA researchers to be of a very different nature from learning a second language as an adult. If this teacher is monolingual, s/he does not have direct experience of what the student is doing (adult language learning). There is virtually no other subject, except for possibly the related area of adult literacy, in which the teacher does not have the experience of learning the content in the same way as the student. In science, in maths, in research methods, in driver education, in management education or in any subject we could name except second language learning, the teacher has been a conscious learner of the content before undergoing training to impart it to a new generation of learners.

If the teacher has learned English post-childhood (non-native speaker) s/he has direct experience of what it is the student is doing, in task (learning a language as an adult) and content (English). If the teacher’s first language is English, but she has learned another language post-childhood, (becoming a NS bilingual)\(^9\) s/he has experience of the

\(^9\) Of course not everyone who learns a second language becomes bilingual. As discussed extensively in Chapter 3.1, there is now general agreement that bilinguality exists on a continuum from minimal
task (learning a language as an adult) with slightly different content (a second language, but not English). So the NNS teacher is the most directly comparable with our teacher of biology, as is shown in the following points:

- The NNS teacher has learned the same content (English) in the same way as his or her students.
- The NS bilingual teacher knows the same content (English) but has acquired it in a different way, and has learned different content (a second language) in a similar way, to his or her students.
- The NS monolingual teacher knows the same content (English) but has acquired it in a different way. The monolingual teacher has no experience of learning any language beyond babyhood, and, as unequivocally accepted by SLA theorists, first language learning is a qualitatively different experience and one which is not accessible for examination by the speaker.\(^\text{10}\)

We can also propose a further type of content knowledge:

\begin{center}
\textit{(d) knowledge of a second language and second language use.}
\end{center}

If (c) is knowledge gained from the process of consciously learning a second language, (d) is that knowledge as a result of having learned another language. This may be the result of the process in (c) learning another language as a conscious endeavour, or it may be the result of early bilingualism, in which case the experience of learning it (c) will probably not be accessible for reflection. The language itself, however, \textit{is} accessible as an available source for comparison and contrast with English, giving the bilingual speaker (NS or NNS) some insight into what is similar to or different from English, in other words the potential for performing cross-linguistic comparison. Here it is timely to recall one of the statements in the ACTA/ATESOL Teacher competencies examined in Chapter 2: that it is desirable for teachers to understand the structure of the subject matter \textit{and its relationship to other areas of knowledge} (Hogan 1994, Appendix A – emphasis added). These other areas of knowledge are not specified, but it is

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\(^{10}\) Both NS bilinguals and NS monolinguals have what Woods (1996) calls ‘native-speaker intuitions’ about English, or what is sometimes called the ability to make ‘grammaticality judgements’. This is sometimes held up as a superior ability of NS teachers, but others maintain it is less important than an in-depth knowledge of the language’s structure (Medgyes 1994).
reasonable to suggest that in the case of English, they might include other languages. A further aspect of (d) is that if the second language is regularly used, or has been regularly used regularly, the person may have experience of ‘bilingual language use’ as discussed in Section 3.1. That is, he or she may have personal experience of differential proficiency according to domain or skill, and of code-switching. He or she may also have access to affective aspects of bilinguality (considered in the section on ‘the bilingual person’ in 3.1), such as life as a bilingual, life in a bilingual family and related issues of the rearing and education of bilingual or monolingual children. These two points are relevant to the New Zealand competency statement discussed in Chapter 2, (excluded from the final draft) that: “teachers should have an understanding of bilingualism” (Haddock 1998:6).

3.5.7.2 Procedural knowledge

After examining the area of content knowledge we now need to consider what procedural knowledge might be. In Woods’ terms it is “managing the learning of [language and language use]” (Woods 1996:194). There is general agreement in the literature that in these post-method times (Kumaravadivelu 2001) there is no one accepted way of teaching language, nor should there be. There is a strong emphasis on what he calls ‘particularity’ which means that language pedagogy must be “sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu” (Kumaravadivelu 2001:538). It is clear that it is neither possible nor desirable to specify the exact nature of this procedural knowledge, then, since it will differ along all the parameters Kumaravadivelu mentions. We could, however, consider from where this procedural knowledge might be derived.

Procedural knowledge for ESL teaching could be derived from ‘apprenticeship’ sources, where teachers in a given context learn how to teach from more experienced teachers. It could be derived from formal study of language pedagogy, which may be context-sensitive, if it is constructed with Kumaravadivelu’s ‘local pedagogy’ in mind. Formal study towards procedural knowledge may be less context-sensitive if it is conducted, for example through distance study provided by a far-off university which does not adhere to the ‘local pedagogy’ argument. Ongoing classroom experience is a further source of procedural knowledge, whereby through reflection and evaluation, the teacher modifies
practice. Yet another source of procedural knowledge is the self (Bailey et al. 2001). The most obvious source of this in the context of the self is the teacher’s own experience of being taught, where available. Now this experience may be of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ teaching, and may be patchily remembered: for these reasons it is hardly likely to form an ideal blueprint for developing a procedural knowledge in any particular current context. However as Bailey et al. (1996) point out, decades ago Lortie’s (1975) construct of the apprenticeship of observation showed us that teachers’ experiences as students (Lortie 1975) form powerful imprints which are unlikely to be erased by a few hundred hours of teacher education. These imprints tend to function as “de facto guides” particularly for new teachers as they approach the classroom (Freeman 1992:3). Clearly teachers do not simply reproduce the way they were taught, but re-think it in the light of training, later experience, varied challenges and professional development. For teachers to arrive at a better understanding of what to do and how to do it, it is crucial for them to be able to “make the tacit explicit” in asking questions such as ‘How do I know what I know? Why do I ask my students to behave or think in particular ways?’ (Shulman 1988:33). Hence if the teacher has no prior language learning experience, or if that experience is ignored, is not reflected upon and left dormant in professional circles, it is a lost source of potential understanding and development.

In summary, then, procedural knowledge (knowledge of how to teach English in any given context), may be developed from a number of sources, but the teacher’s own experience of being taught language is one such source which should be recognised and valued for the reasons given above. This point will be raised further in discussion of the data regarding teaching strategies and learning strategies in Chapter 7. In maintaining that one source of procedural knowledge in teaching English is the teacher’s own language learning experience, it is important to emphasise that this will only be the case where the learning has been through ‘formal instruction’ (Ellis 1994) in a classroom. It is the ‘being taught a language by a teacher’ which is likely to be a possible source of procedural knowledge, and it is unlikely to be there in the case of adult informal learning, or of early bilingualism.
3.5.8 Which kinds of knowledge are Australian ESL teachers expected to have?

The kinds of knowledge discussed in the previous section can be divided into two categories: those demanded by the profession:

(a) proficient user knowledge: the ability to speak and write English as a competent user
(b) skilled analyst knowledge: the ability to analyse form and function in English

and those which are not currently demanded by the profession:

(c) knowledge/experience of formal learning of the content (English or a second language)
(d) knowledge of a second language.

ESL teachers are expected without question to have content knowledge (a) and (b) – to be proficient users and skilled analysts of English (Wright and Bolitho 1997). There is some debate about the relative strengths and weaknesses of native (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) teachers in these areas, as discussed in Chapter 3.1.7. NNS are sometimes thought to have inferior proficiency as language users, (knowledge type (a)) particularly in idiomaticity and phonology, while they are sometimes defended against NS as being more skilled language analysts since they have had to consciously learn the grammar. As far as (a) goes, many NS are more competent users than many NNS, but a highly educated NNS may be a more skilled and competent user (in ‘standard English’) than a poorly-educated NS.\(^{11}\) While many NNS teaching in non-English speaking countries (ie. an EFL context) may have a much lower proficiency in English than a NS (Forman 1994, Medgyes 1994), in English speaking countries it is generally regarded as indispensable to have a proficiency level akin to a NS. Being a proficient user, then, is not in question in the Australian context: it is a requirement for employment in the profession.

Regarding knowledge type (b) (skilled analyst), both NS and NNS can reach high standards of explicit knowledge about English, through relatively short training courses and spending time with grammar books and similar tools. This is what Rampton (1990)

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\(^{11}\) This point is made regularly by authors who contest the existence of the term ‘native speaker’, pointing out that there is such a wide range of proficiencies and literacy standards among NS that ‘native speaker proficiency’ is useless as a definition of language proficiency. (Paikeday 1985, Davies 1991, 2003, Rampton 1990)
calls ‘expertise’, stressing that it can be learned, as opposed to being innate. Ability to analyse English is a requirement for a teacher to enter the profession, at least as evidenced by having undertaken an approved training course. That this analytic ability is seen as essential is also clear by virtue of its appearing in TESOL competency statements. (See Chapter 2) In summary, then, NS, both monolingual and bilingual, are proficient users of English, and NNS have to attain similar proficiency to be employed as ESL teachers in Australia. NNS may be more skilled at analysing English, but NS, both monolingual and bilingual, can attain such knowledge and skill level through training.

There remain the questions of (c) – knowledge/experience of formal learning of the content: a second language and (d) – proficiency in a second language. Here (c) is the process of learning, while (d) is the product, or the result of successful learning. The NNS has direct experience of both of these, as does the bilingual NS. The monolingual NS teacher of ESL has neither (c) knowledge/experience of learning another language (the process), nor (d) proficiency in another language (the product). Further, in his or her knowledge type (b) (knowledge of the structure and properties of English) the monolingual teacher is constrained by knowing nothing else to compare it with. S/he knows what is English, but not what is not-English. As Hawkins (1999:128) puts it, with apologies to Kipling: 12 “What should they know of English, who only England know?”, making the point that in order to fully know a thing, we need to be able to compare it with other similar things, in order to perceive its unique characteristics, its shared characteristics and its boundaries. Some features of English are held in common with all languages, some are held in common with some languages but not others, and some are unique to English. With no knowledge of other languages, the monolingual teacher is not in a position to make judgements about these, nor therefore about the boundaries of the subject content and the possible prior knowledge of the learners. Such knowledge can also be obtained from studying comparative linguistics, but this is generally not an element of TESOL teacher training.

It is (c) and (d) which are not required by the profession for the purposes of entering pre-service education or for employment as an ESL teacher, and hence, as I have argued, they remain unexamined in theory or practice. I also argue that it is precisely

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12 Kipling (1892, cited in Partington 1993) wrote in ‘The English Flag’: “What should they know of England who only England know?”
these – the experience of learning a second language, and the knowledge of a second language – that is likely to be a rich source of insights which might contribute to teachers’ knowledge and beliefs, or what Woods (1996) calls BAK – beliefs, assumptions and knowledge about language learning. I argue therefore that it is imperative to explore, and to try to understand, the nature of teachers’ experience in learning languages and of being proficient users of more than one language, in an attempt to see where this knowledge and experience fits into their whole repertoire as teachers of ESL.

In order to further clarify the kinds of content and procedural knowledge discussed above, and how they may be a feature of the backgrounds of early bilingual, late bilingual, monolingual, native or non-native speaker teachers, the following figure shows them in table form.
Table 1

Content and procedural knowledge of NS, NNS, bilingual, monolingual teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NS early bilingual *</th>
<th>NS late bilingual</th>
<th>NS monolingual</th>
<th>( \neg )NS early bilingual</th>
<th>NNS late bilingual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) a proficient user of English</td>
<td>Yes by definition</td>
<td>Yes by definition</td>
<td>Yes by definition</td>
<td>Yes, has to be to enter profession</td>
<td>Yes, has to be to enter profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) a skilled analyst of English</td>
<td>Yes, by training</td>
<td>Yes, by training</td>
<td>Yes, by training</td>
<td>Yes, by training</td>
<td>Yes, by training and own learning experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) experienced in learning of a second language</td>
<td>Yes, a LOTE but experience may not be accessible</td>
<td>Yes, a LOTE</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, English but experience may not be accessible</td>
<td>Yes, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) a proficient user of a second language</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedural knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) formal - from teaching qualifications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) informal - from personal experience</td>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>Yes, but with different content</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shaded areas are knowledge types required by the profession for employment as an ESL teacher in Australia.

* ‘Early’ and ‘late’ bilingual are not possible to define absolutely. The watershed of puberty is often taken as the cut-off between the two, but as the review of the question of age in second language acquisition (Chapter 3.1) shows, there is considerable debate over this. For my purposes here, the later the bilinguality occurs, the more chance there is that the experience of learning or acquiring the second language will be consciously accessible.
Table 1 shows how teachers with bilingual, monolingual, native English-speaking and non-native English-speaking backgrounds have, or do not have, the kinds of content knowledge and procedural knowledge outlined earlier in this section. Knowledge types (a), (b) and (e) are required of all teachers to meet the standards set by the profession (indicated by shading on the table). It is knowledge types (c), (d) and (f) which are not currently required by the profession which are the concern of this thesis. Figure 1 shows how a non-native speaker late bilingual and a native speaker late bilingual will have command of all six knowledge types. NS and NNS early bilinguals will have either four or five, but their experience of learning and/or teaching (c) and (f) may not be consciously accessible, if it took place in childhood. The monolingual English-speaking teacher, however, will only have access to three out of six types of knowledge, lacking those in (c), (d) and (f) which derive from experience. The question of whether this matters is the focus of the thesis.

3.5.9 A framework for examining teachers’ knowledge and beliefs

Reference was made above to the proliferation of ways of describing teachers’ internal mental processes. All the constructs mentioned in the literature in teacher cognition, as internal cognitive processes, are by nature unobservable and subject to being differently defined by different researchers. As yet there is little consensus on the various uses of the terms (Borg 2003), and there is little to suggest that answers have been sought from philosophical studies of epistemology, or that this would necessarily be helpful. Perhaps we simply need commonly-agreed terms to enable discussion to take place aimed at understanding ‘what goes on in teachers’ heads’. Possibly one which is sufficiently broad is “knowledge, beliefs and perceptions that shape what teachers know, and therefore what they do, in their teaching” (Freeman 1994:182). Freeman bases this choice on his intention to “encompass the epistemological categories generally used in researching teacher education”, citing Clark and Peterson (1986) and Clandinin and Connelly (1987) to support his argument (Freeman 1994:182). Several authors claim that one important source of teachers’ knowledge is classroom experience – ie that which differentiates a novice teacher from an experienced teacher. This, many suggest, is an important source of material upon which to reflect and to shape or modify the teachers’ knowledge/ beliefs/ perceptions. Teachers learn from their students, and from what works and what doesn’t in particular contexts. They use this learning to adapt and modify their teaching approach. For this study, however, focussed as it is on teachers’
life experience, and less so on their ESL classroom teaching experience, these three words do not seem to allow sufficient room for discussion of teachers’ language biographical experience and how it might contribute to their ‘professional knowledge’.

I therefore propose that the following terms include most if not all the notions encountered so far in the literature: knowledge, beliefs and insights. Knowledge, after Woods (1996:195) is “things we ‘know’ – conventionally accepted ‘facts’ which we hold to have been demonstrated, or at least to be demonstrable”. Beliefs, after a modified version of Woods (1996:195) are the “acceptance of a proposition …for which there is accepted disagreement”. An example of knowledge about language and language learning might be that English has articles whereas Bahasa Indonesia does not. An example of a belief about which there are differing views in the profession is that ESL students need explicit focus on grammar as well as communicative practice.

The third component is one which incorporates Clandinin and Connelly’s (1987:490) “personal practical knowledge: knowledge which is experiential, embodied, and reconstructed out of the narratives of a teacher’s life” and will here be termed ‘insights’. An insight is an understanding gained from personal experience which allows us to see how previously understood realities could be different. It illuminates something previously unseen, makes sense of something previously incomprehensible, or lends a new perspective on something taken for granted. It is the meeting-place of knowledge, beliefs and experience. An example could be of a person who has knowledge of the criminal justice system, and holds certain beliefs about crime and punishment, who visits a prison for the first time. The visit may result in insights which interact with their existing knowledge and beliefs and change, modify or reinforce them. Whether the result is alteration or reinforcement, the experience and the insights will often have some sort of effect. Knowledge may be seen in a new light, and beliefs may be strengthened or questioned. In a sociolinguistic context, a person who grows up in Australia speaking a first language other than English and encountering English for the first time at primary school will have different insights about language, about family and about schooling than a person who grew up speaking English from birth. If both of those people then enrol in a TESOL course and study second language acquisition and bilingualism, we might expect the insights derived from their experiences to interact differently with the theoretical ‘knowledge’ they gain from lectures and from reading, and hence the formation of their professional ‘beliefs’. There is no assumption in this
argument about the ‘truth value’ of such insights, nor about whether some insights are better or worse than others, but that different experiences, in this case language experiences, will result in different insights, some richer than others. Those insights, as shown in the literature discussed earlier will interact with teachers’ knowledge and beliefs.

The question we need to ask then, is the following. What kind of insights about language and language learning, arising from what kinds of experiences, might be useful to ESL teachers in the development of their professional knowledge and beliefs?

We can see from the structured language learning experiences reviewed above, and from the small number of studies which investigate prior language learning, that there is some recognition that language learning experience contributes something to the knowledge base of ESL teachers, but there is as yet no systematic investigation of what that something may be.

Knowledge and beliefs, it could be argued, often (but not always) arise directly out of formal teacher education: teachers are expected to acquire ‘knowledge’ about phonology, syntax, bilingualism, research into motivation etcetera. They are also expected to develop stances, or beliefs, on propositions within language learning, for example, whether systemic functional grammar is more useful in teaching writing than traditional grammar. The development of insights may form part of a formal program, usually in the form of a structured approach to reflection on practice (McKay 2002) or reflection on prior knowledge and beliefs. This study, however, contends that insights gained from personal experience, particularly language learning experience, are of a different nature from the knowledge and beliefs gained in formal teacher education, but that they interact with them. This proposition is consistent with, but expands, upon, Wallace’s (1991) notion of ‘experiential knowledge’. It is also consistent with Freeman’s (1996b) critique of the early work in teacher cognition which emphasised teacher decision-making, wherein he asks whether the relation of teachers’ past experience to their present practices, particularly their “…storied or narrative nature…” (Freeman 1996b:363) can be adequately represented by current research focuses. In doing so he argues for a recognition of contexts of place and time as powerful influences on teachers’ thinking. Social contexts of time and place are crucial in shaping
teacher understanding and he says that these include “..teachers’ life histories and professional life spans” (Freeman 1996b:363).

The field of language teacher education, then, is beginning to recognise the complex, interwoven, multi-sourced and changing nature of what teachers ‘know’. Researchers are agreed that classroom teaching experience is at least as influential a source of knowledge as academic training (Wallace 1991), and there is increasing attention paid to past classroom learning experience (Lortie 1975, Bailey et al. 1996). There are calls for more investigation of teachers’ life histories (Fang 1996), of the personal, biographical and historical aspects of teaching (Goodson 1992a, 1992b), practical knowledge based on teachers’ unique experiences (Cumming 1989), teachers’ rich personal and educational histories (Vélez Rendón 2002), teachers’ personal, practical knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly 1987, Elbaz 1981, Golombek 1998), teachers’ storied, narrative histories and professional life spans (Freeman 1996b), and for ethnographies of ESOL teachers to explore their ‘culture’ (Brumfit 1997). Despite all these calls for a focus on teachers’ personal experience, there is as yet very little enquiry into the role of prior language learning experience.

This thesis argues, however, that if experiential knowledge is accepted as a powerful contributor to teachers’ beliefs, and if experiential knowledge includes not only that derived from classroom teaching and learning experience but also from life experience, then language learning experience, formal or informal, must be worthy of investigation in terms of how it influences teachers’ store of knowledge and beliefs. The thesis proposes that language learning experience is a powerful shaper of insights which interact in dialectical ways with knowledge and beliefs gained from formal and informal sources.
Chapter 4

Method

Chapter 4 will explain the theoretical justification for the research method and describe the design of the study in terms of its aims, who the respondents were, how the data was collected and how the data was analysed. It begins by re-stating the research questions. There follows an outline of qualitative and quantitative research traditions, leading into an overview of the characteristics, problems and benefits of qualitative interview-based research. The methods used in similar studies are discussed, and finally the design of the present study is outlined.

4.1 Research questions

1. Does the language learning experience of teachers of ESL to adults contribute to their professional knowledge and beliefs?
2. If so, what kinds of language learning experience make a contribution and in what ways?

The method selected for this study was a combination of semi-structured interviews with teachers of ESL to adults, conducted at their teaching sites, and elicitation of a ‘language biography’ from the same teachers. These methods are consistent with the view that a wide-ranging interpretive methodology in the qualitative tradition was the most appropriate to generate insights useful in addressing the research questions. The decision to use these methods will be placed in the overall context of research traditions in the next section.

4.2 Research traditions

Most authors writing about research methods make a distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches, also called ‘scientific’ and ‘naturalistic’ inquiry, although opinions differ about the extent to which they are separate paradigms, and about the value and applicability of each. Silverman (1993) sees them as two schools of social science, calling the first ‘positivist’ and stating that in essence it attempts to test
correlations between variables. The second school he terms ‘interpretive social science’, claiming that it is more concerned with observation and description, and occasionally, generating hypotheses rather than seeking to prove or disprove them. Other researchers, though, frown on the view of qualitative research as having the purpose of generating hypotheses to be later confirmed by experimental research (Nunan 1992:57). Those who do draw a clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative research or positivist and interpretive orientations (Cohen and Manion 1989, Bogdan and Biklen 1998, Glesne and Peshkin 1992) offer a variety of ways in which they differ. Quantitative research has been called obtrusive, controlled, objective, generaliseable and tending to assume the existence of facts external to the researcher which await discovery (Nunan 1992). The characteristics of qualitative research are that it is naturalistic, it uses descriptive data, it is concerned with process, it is inductive, and it is concerned with meaning as seen by the participants (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). Nunan (1992) claims that qualitative research is grounded, meaning that theory is generated from data rather than being imposed on it, and that it is exploratory in nature, expansionist, descriptive and inductive.

Van Lier (1988), writing specifically about applied linguistic research, offers a different perspective. He argues that research can be categorised according to where it lies on two parameters: an interventionist parameter and a selectivity parameter, represented visually as two intersecting axes. Such a representation gives four possible ‘modes’ of research which van Lier calls ‘measuring’, ‘controlling’, ‘watching’ and ‘asking/doing’, each exemplified by different research tools. The mode most relevant to the present study, for example, is ‘asking/doing’ which is characterised by interviewing, elicitation and action research, whereas the most interventionist and selective ‘mode’ involves experimental or quasi-experimental methods.

Most authors agree that until the last two or three decades applied linguistics research has been of the positivist, quantitative, or interventionist/selective (van Lier 1988) kind, but that qualitative, interpretive studies are now well established in the field. This being so, some claim it is now unnecessary to justify or defend the use of qualitative methods since they have already proved useful in cumulating substantial bodies of knowledge (Silverman 1997). Others, however, such as Edge and Richards (1998) and Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) argue that the interrelated fields of applied linguistics and second
language acquisition are still heavily dominated by a quantitative paradigm and many refuse to recognise the value of qualitative studies.

There is also much agreement that while these two paradigms clearly exist, their boundaries are blurred rather than sharply delineated (Silverman 1993, 1997, 2000, Glesne and Peshkin 1992, Bogdan and Biklen 1998, Nunan 1992). For example, Grotjahn (1987) claims that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is an oversimplification and suggests that it is more fruitful to consider and analyse research studies on the basis of three questions: the method of collecting data, the type of data collected and the method of analysis used for the data. Mixing these types gives us a possible eight research paradigms instead of a binary divide. Glesné and Peshkin (1992) maintain that rather than argue about which approach is better, we should see that different approaches allow us to know and understand different things about the world. Chaudron (1986), too, concedes that both quantitative and qualitative approaches have a role to play in second language research. Ultimately it is a question of selecting a research methodology, and contingent methods, which are most likely to prove fruitful for investigating a particular research question in a particular context (Silverman 1997, Nunan 1992). The research questions for this study were most appropriately investigated using the exploratory tools of semi-structured interviews and language biographies. These methods allowed for the gathering of rich data which was little constrained by the researcher’s anticipation of what might emerge. A descriptive, interpretive approach to the data was thus possible in which the theory generated was firmly grounded in the data itself (Nunan 1992).

4.3 Characteristics, problems and benefits of selected research methods

Research methods which are generally thought of as qualitative include semi-structured interviews, observation, text analysis, life histories, stimulated recall and journalling (Glesne and Peshkin 1992, Nunan 1992, Silverman 1993). The most appropriate research design for the present study was a combination of a semi-structured interview and the eliciting of a language biography which can be thought of as a sub-set of life history. As with any research method, there are strengths and weaknesses contained in each of these tools, and these will be considered in this section.
The advantages of semi-structured interviews are that the respondent does most of the talking, while the researcher introduces topics, asks general questions and then guides the discussion by asking more specific questions or probing answers given. This kind of interview is most useful when the aim of the research is to throw light on a puzzling or unexamined question (Rubin and Rubin 1995), as in the present study. By seeking to constrain the answers as little as possible, and by permitting the respondent to answer at length if he or she wishes, a rich discussion can be generated as opposed to short answers to specific questions. One of the weaknesses of this method can be the asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and the respondent. The researcher may be in a more senior or powerful position than the respondent, and, in asking the questions and generally directing the interview, is more in control. Ways to deal with this imbalance of power are to ensure that the interviewee has the freedom to change or redirect a topic, and also to ensure that the researcher has ‘member’s competence’ (Woods 1996), which comes from being accepted as part of the interviewee’s community, or at least as having earned the right to participate in it. In this study I made it clear to the interviewees that I was an experienced ESL teacher who had taught the same courses as they had, and I could therefore claim equivalent experience and similar concerns. This factor is also recognized by Rubin and Rubin (1995:172) in their suggestion that researchers “learn the language” of their respondents. The acceptance by the teachers of me as a peer who spoke the same language, rather than as an outsider contributed to their willingness to talk frankly about their ideas and experiences.

Another possible problem in semi-structured interviews is that respondents may say what they think the researcher wishes to hear, or say what is the accepted line of thought in the profession, or say whatever will cast themselves in a good light. In other words, what the respondent says may not be the ‘truth’. Since qualitative data is always subjectively obtained, what counts is not some objective version of ‘truth’ even if this could be established, but what can be considered ‘trustworthy’ and ‘credible’ (Edge and Richards 1998). The present study took a phenomenographic perspective (Marton 1981) in that it was less interested in establishing whether what the teachers said was closely linked to their actions in their real world, and more interested in the teachers’ perceptions of their language learning and teaching. In Marton’s (1981) terms, this is the difference between a first-order perspective, wherein one sets out to make statements about the world, and a second-order perspective, wherein one sets out to make statements about people’s ideas of, or experience of the world as they see it. This
latter perspective is also taken by those researchers who focus on life history as a research method, who emphasise that it is not so much the events described which matter, but the participants’ understanding of the events and their later impact or resolution (Kouritzin 2000).

Caveats about retrospective accounts are made by Wenden (1986:197), investigating what second language learners know and remember about their learning experience. She points out that retrospective accounts can be “a mixture of personal fact, inference based on personal fact, and popular belief, with a result that is not at all related to a particular [person’s] experience”. She states that for this reason, such accounts should be interpreted cautiously as a source of behavioural data, but can be very valuable as insights into a person’s metacognitive knowledge. Christianson (1995), too, in researching the experiences of adult bilinguals through an elicitation of their language biographies, concedes that such retrospective case studies are subject to ‘subjective reporting’ and the effects of the passage of time. While this is true, we must also concede that there may be no other way to obtain such data as is obtained by life histories or targeted biographies, with all their problems.

Qualitative research, which by its nature does not attempt to conform to scientific standards of reliability, validity, falsifiability or generaliseability, must still display the rigorous critical standards demanded of all credible research (Silverman 1993). It has often been criticised for not meeting the above standards, but there have been several attempts to show how non-quantifiable and non-randomly obtained data can still be used to make what we might call ‘truth claims’. This is expressed in the question posed by Edge and Richards (1998:9): “What warrant do you have for the statements that you make?” In other words, they suggest it is the task of the researcher to convince readers that claims have substance and are credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest ways in which this can be done in naturalistic inquiry, by replacing the standard rationalist criteria with naturalistic criteria which reflect the same underlying concepts. Instead of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, they propose credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Evidence of long-term experience of the context under study can provide credibility, as in this researcher’s long experience of the ESL field. Transferability is dependent on the richness of description and interpretation offered, while rigorous and transparent documentation of the research steps can provide dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985). What is
sometimes called ‘triangulation’ (Cohen and Manion 1989) can be obtained by the
collection of multiple types of data and from multiple respondents, but this is not
always possible or desirable. Woods (1996), whose ethnographic study of the beliefs
and knowledge of eight teachers is considered exemplary (Long and Richards 1996),
refers to ‘dynamic triangulation’ in which the researcher and the audience for the
research participate in contributing to the ongoing construction of understanding of a
particular area. This is a claim sometimes made to justify case study research: that by
assembling a sufficient body of qualitative work in a given area, eventually significant
‘truths’ will become apparent.

In discussing life history research, Kouritzin (2000) deals with these issues by
discussing how it is possible to achieve representivity in life history research: by
expanding the number of subjects it is possible to reach a ‘saturation of knowledge’ at
which point no new major themes are uncovered. So, in her research “although each life
history added new layers of understanding, new contexts and new foci, the more
generaliseable partial truths had largely made themselves apparent” (Kouritzin
2000:23). She discusses verifiability, which can be seen in two ways with both
interviews and biographies. First, while it is entirely possible that respondents may give
an inaccurate or embellished account of either their beliefs or their past (as suggested by
Wenden 1986, above), from a phenomenographic perspective it hardly matters, since it
is the participants’ experience as told by them which is of interest. Secondly, since the
advent of postmodern strands of thought, it is widely accepted that there may be
differing and competing versions of ‘truth’, (Foucault 1969, Harrison 1991), one of
which is that constructed between two interlocutors in a particular context, as in the
research interview. Kouritzin (2000) makes a further point that if ethical procedures are
followed regarding confidentiality, if participants are volunteers and if the power
differential is minimised, there is little motivation for interviewees to purposely lie.
Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) in their analysis of language learning autobiographies, also
consider matters of validity, reliability and significance. They cite Polkinghorne’s
(1988) application of these to narrative-based research, which is reminiscent of the
approach taken by Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed above. Polkinghorne professes
that validity must be claimed on the basis of a well-grounded conclusion, but it does not
presume certainty, only likelihood. Reliability, instead of being based on the
consistency of measuring instruments which are able to replicate results, is a feature of
the dependability of the data and the strength of the analysis of the data. Significance is
not about probability, but about meaningfulness and importance in the area being studied (Polkinghorne 1988).

4.4 Method choices in similar studies

Although no studies have been located which aim to discover the contribution of language learning background to the knowledge and beliefs of practising ESL teachers of adults, there have been several studies which are pertinent in either content or method, and they will be outlined and commented on here.

As discussed at length in Chapter 3.2, there have been numerous studies which attempt to explore the link between teachers’ beliefs, assumptions and knowledge and their classroom actions. These have been reviewed by Shavelson and Stern (1981), Clark and Peterson (1986), Clandinin and Connelly (1987), Fang (1996), Freeman 2002 and Borg (2003). The first four reviews focus on teachers in general while Freeman’s (2002) and Borg’s (2003) reviews focus on language teachers, with an emphasis on TESOL teachers. Borg (2003) acknowledges that research into teacher cognition in language teaching is a recent but growing phenomenon, that as yet there is little uniformity of understanding of differing terms such as beliefs, knowledge and assumptions, and that there is so far little evidence of a coherent research agenda.

The most common methods used to investigate the relationship of teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, experience and values to their instructional practice are the observation of teachers’ regular lessons combined with semi-structured interviews. Observed lessons are usually videotaped or audiotaped, and in many cases the tapes are then used in the interview to induce stimulated recall. The researcher usually also takes field notes during observations and collects lesson materials (Woods 1996, Andrews 1999, Borg 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, Årva and Medgyes 2000, Burns 1992, 1996b, Tsui 2003, Binnie Smith 1996, Gutierrez Almarza 1996, Cho 1990). Additional methods include audio-recording of teachers’ comments about videotaped lessons (Woods 1996), the systematic collection of a wide range of curriculum materials (Woods 1996, Tsui 2003), the keeping of journals by the subjects (Bailey et al. 1996, Gutierrez Almarza 1996), and the ‘shadowing’ of teachers in order to gain additional data by conversational means inside and outside the workplace (Woods 1996, Tsui 2003).
Those studies which focus on a particular area of teaching knowledge or practice include metalinguistic awareness (Andrews 1997, 1999), the teaching of grammar (Borg 1998, 1999a, 1999b), teaching beginning learners (Burns 1996b) and the teaching of writing (Burns 1992). Because classroom observation and semi-structured interviews are time-consuming and generate large amounts of data, the numbers of teachers studied tend to be small, as shown in the following list: one teacher was studied by Borg (1998), four by Tsui (2003) and Gutierrez Almarza (1996), five by Borg (1999b) six by Burns (1992, 1996b), seven by Bailey et al (1996), eight by Woods (1996), nine by Binnie-Smith (1996), ten by Årva and Medgyes (2000), fourteen by Andrews (1997) and seventeen by Andrews (1999). Some took an ethnographic approach, with longitudinal collection of data over months or years, with data analysis taking a correspondingly long period of time (Woods 1996, Tsui 2003). Other studies involved one or two interviews combined with the observation of one or several lessons (Burns 1996b, Borg 1999b, Årva and Medgyes 2000). There are of course other studies with much larger samples, for example Peacock’s (2001) study of the beliefs of pre-service teachers, but they tend to be based on surveys or other quantifiable instruments. The advantage of small-scale studies is that in-depth, rich data can be gathered and analysed, but a disadvantage is that there is little likelihood that all the possible themes or issues can be uncovered. This reflects a permanent tension in research between achieving either breadth or depth of coverage of an issue or topic.

All of the studies outlined in the previous paragraphs (with the exception of Peacock (2001) who used an experimental pre- and post-test design) used a combination of interviews and class observation since their primary aim was to discover links between teachers’ cognitions and their classroom practice. Studies which have not been concerned to link cognitions to practice, but instead have investigated knowledge and beliefs arising from language experiences, have used interviews and biographies (Christianson 1995), autobiographical texts (Pavlenko 2001, Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000) or interviews alone (Kouritzin 2000). None of these studies, however, investigated the language experiences of teachers, but of bilingual members of the general population. Adult Japanese/English bilinguals’ experience was studied by Christianson (1995), published language learning memoirs of immigrants by Pavlenko (2001) and Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), and oral life histories in the context of immigrants’ language loss by Kouritzin (2000). Bailey et al. (1996) appear to be the only researchers who focussed on the contribution of teacher language learning
experience to teachers’ professional knowledge and beliefs. Their study, however, differs from the present study since it was conducted by a group of teachers-in-training who wrote retrospective accounts of their own language learning, and interpreted their findings. The subjects and authors were seven pre-service ESL teachers who, with Bailey as supervisor, investigated the links between their own language learning experiences and their developing knowledge and beliefs about ESL teaching via the writing and analysis of introspective journals.

It appeared then that there was a useful place for a study of the language learning experience of practising ESL teachers which cast a wider net than the previous studies. Since there was no intention to link teachers’ language experience or lack of it to their actual practice, it was not desirable to include classroom observation as did the studies reviewed above. The kinds of insights which might arise from teachers’ own language learning experience are unlikely to be amenable to being observed in practice. Teaching behaviours can be attributed to any number of factors such as teaching experience, type of training, personality and contextual factors, and it would therefore not be possible to isolate language experience as a contributing influence. The decision to use interviews and elicited biographies meant that a relatively large number of teachers (thirty-one) could be included, thereby gathering data on a wide variety of language learning backgrounds. In this way it was anticipated that the study could illuminate a range of ways in which language learning experience might contribute to the development of teachers’ professional knowledge and beliefs. The next section will describe the procedures followed of gathering and analysing the data, and link them to the concepts of credibility, representivity and verifiability discussed above.

4.5 Design of the study

Since the intention of this study was to find out whether language learning experience is a contributor to a teacher’s professional knowledge, semi-structured interviews and elicited language biographies were used as the main research tools. Early in the study, five ‘key informants’ who were prominent figures in the management of large ESL programs were interviewed, and their input was used in designing the recruitment process and the interview protocol. An advantage of this design was that it permitted the study of a larger number of subjects than would have been possible had classroom observation been used, and this ensured ‘representivity’ (Kouritzin 2000). The intention
was to recruit sufficient numbers of teachers to provide a wide range of language learning experience, from highly multilingual to totally monolingual (see Chapter 5 for definitions), and to ensure representation of three key groups: non-native speakers (who are bilingual by definition), native-English speakers who are bilingual, and native-English speakers who are monolingual.

4.6 Respondents

A total of thirty-one practising teachers from seven ESL centres in four Australian cities participated in the study. They were recruited as volunteers via several means. Some were personally known to the researcher, some were suggested by the researcher’s colleagues and some were recruited by the researcher’s appeals at staff meetings in their centre. All potential volunteers were given an information sheet outlining the nature of the research, and assurances regarding anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw. Upon agreeing to participate, teachers were given a more formal information sheet and signed a consent form. The study was described as an investigation of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about language learning and language teaching and how those beliefs might be formed. An explicit focus on the contribution of language learning experience to knowledge and beliefs was not flagged, since it was felt that this would discourage monolingual teachers from volunteering.

Of the thirty-one teachers, twenty-nine were female and two were male. Their ages ranged from early twenties to early sixties, with most being between thirty and fifty-five. These ages are estimates only since date of birth was not recorded. All had tertiary qualifications in TESOL, but these ranged from the minimum of a degree plus a certificate in TESOL to Master’s degrees in Education and/or Applied Linguistics. Their ESL teaching experience ranged from several months to over twenty years, and some had taught other subjects and/or other languages. Three of the teachers were unambiguously non-native speakers of English (NNS), while a further five were early bilinguals who had begun life with another language but were now dominant in English or were balanced bilinguals in English and another language. Fourteen teachers were native speaker (NS) bilinguals, and nine were monolinguals. It should be noted, however, that these numbers were only finalised at the data analysis stage, since allocation to a category depended on scrutiny of the amount and nature of language experience, as well as the adoption of a workable definition of bilingualism. The
researcher had hoped to obtain more NNS volunteers, but it became apparent that they were less likely to volunteer than NS teachers, possibly because of the potential stigma attaching to NNS status which was discussed in Chapter 2. The aim, however, was not to obtain a representative ‘sample’ according to the proportions of these groups in the ESL workforce, since firstly these are unknown and secondly it is inappropriate to qualitative research. Instead the aim was to recruit sufficient numbers with various kinds of language backgrounds to enable similarities and differences to be explored and described. No conclusions can or should be drawn, then, about the numbers in each category. Given the constraints of recruiting busy teachers as volunteers as well as those of the researcher’s time, resources and travel, the researcher attempted to recruit teachers from a range of language learning backgrounds, and in this was successful.

4.7 Data gathering

As part of the preparation for the interviews, I was able to gain permission to observe a regular class for up to three hours in the case of sixteen of the thirty-one teachers. This observation provided a rich and grounded context for questioning the teachers about their teaching practices and beliefs. The interview protocol was designed mindful of the fact that it is unlikely that monolingual teachers would volunteer for a study which flagged its intentions as investigating the significance of teacher bilingualism. The term ‘monolingual’ denotes the lack of more than one language in opposition to the term ‘bilingual’ and therefore has connotations of a deficit rather than an asset. The interview schedule (Appendix B) was designed, and refined over time, to elicit first teachers’ views and reported practices in teaching ESL, and secondly aspects of their background which included language learning, education and professional development. Questions were constructed about teaching practice and beliefs which all teachers could answer, and language learning background was explored only once the teacher had mentioned it herself or himself. In the first half of the interview, the researcher elicited responses by using open-ended prompts such as: “Tell me about your current class” and “Tell me about a student who is doing well and one who is struggling”. Then came a section which asked for the teacher’s approach to teaching grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary as exemplified in a recent lesson. These aspects were chosen firstly because it was thought they may be revealing of metalinguistic awareness, and secondly, asking for specific instances related to one of these three topics was extremely generative of anecdotes about teaching which, as discussed below in the comparison with Woods’
(1996) study, are a useful way of finding out underlying beliefs. There followed a series of questions about the advantages and disadvantages of teaching English via the medium of English, and lastly a section about the teacher’s personal and professional background.

The first question in this section was: “What aspects of your personal or professional background contribute most to your teaching of ESL?” Since the goal of the study was to find out whether possession of another language is a significant contributor to a teacher’s mental toolkit, opportunity had to be given for teachers themselves, whether bilingual or monolingual, to nominate and talk about their beliefs about language teaching, and which of their own experiences they saw as contributing to those beliefs, without the researcher suggesting an emphasis on prior language learning. The language learning biography questions were asked towards the end of the interview, and only if it transpired that a teacher had language learning experience was the issue explored. For a monolingual teacher, these questions would have appeared no more marked than the questions also asked about teaching qualifications and experience.

The interviews lasted between one and two hours, and were audio-recorded. They were semi-structured in that the researcher worked from a list of questions (Appendix B) but was highly flexible in permitting and indeed encouraging any digressions on the topics of language, language learning or personal experience in teaching, learning, or living in other cultures. The interviews therefore ended up as largely monologic rather than consisting of questions-and-answers. When interviews were transcribed, it was common for there to be a whole page of teacher talk with only minimal responses from the interviewer. The advantage of this was that teachers’ knowledge, beliefs and experience emerged reasonably spontaneously and the data obtained was both rich and varied. It is tentatively suggested that the data is therefore more likely to reflect teachers’ actual stances than responses more closely tied to questions, which may reflect what the teacher thinks is an ‘acceptable’ answer. Sometimes discussion ranged in unplanned directions, which occasioned differential coverage of the planned questions, but resulted in natural, spontaneous data which reflected respondents’ own preoccupations rather than the researcher’s. It was recognised that underlying beliefs are not easy to elicit via direct questioning such as “do you believe...?” or “what is your understanding of...?”. As Woods (1996) points out, beliefs may not always be consciously accessible, and
teachers may answer according to what they think they ought to, or would like to, believe. As he puts it:

When a belief or assumption is articulated in the abstract as a response to an abstract question, there is a much greater chance that it will tend more towards what is expected in the interview situation than what is actually held in the teaching situation and actually influences teaching practices. A belief articulated in the context of a ‘story’ about concrete events, behaviours and plans, is more likely to be grounded in actual behaviour. (Woods 1996:27)

To this end, a range of questions were employed which were aimed at eliciting beliefs via accounts of actual classroom practice in a recent lesson, and eliciting anecdotes and narratives about the teachers’ language learning and language teaching experiences. A detailed language learning biography was taken towards the end of each interview and this sought such information as languages spoken, proficiency in each macroskill, how and where each was learned, level of activity and level of personal attachment for each. Some answers were short, and some became long and monologic.

4.8 Data analysis

4.8.1 Language biographies
The language biographies were reviewed first in order to develop workable groupings into which teachers could be placed in terms of their levels of bilinguality. Using Hamers and Blanc’s (2000) parameters on which to judge bilinguality (see Chapter 3) it was decided to conceptualise language ability and use as a continuum ranging from ‘most multilingual’ to ‘most monolingual’ as a way of representing the teachers’ language backgrounds. As categorisation proceeded, a single continuum became too limiting, and finally a series of continua were used to map teachers’ language biographies, in which each teacher’s languages were considered from the perspective of:

- proficiency at highest achievement
- how a language was learned (eg. classroom instruction/working in the country)
- at what age a language was learned
- reason for learning a language
• affect towards the language
• frequency of current use of each language
• total number of languages the teacher mentions having had contact with.

This method of classifying the teachers’ language biographies provided a very rich picture of individual experiences which does some justice to the complexity of the connections between people and their languages. However, for the purposes of making inferences about the significance of language background and its availability as a resource in language teaching, the original three categories outlined above still appeared to be useful in making distinctions between different kinds of experiences. The distinction between non-native English-speaking bilingual teachers and native English-speaking bilingual teachers is relatively clear-cut although the distinction blurs in the case of those who grew up in Australia speaking another language, then whose L1 was replaced by English through the education system. Four of the bilinguals came into this category. The distinction between native-English speaking bilingual and monolingual teachers, though, has to be made by the application of an arbitrary standard. It was not possible to obtain objective definitions such as the results of standardised tests for each language, nor was it necessarily desirable. The teachers’ own perception of their language ability was seen as more relevant than external measures, and so, with Hamers and Blanc’s (2000) definition in mind, as well as Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000a) acknowledgement of the importance and complexity of how people define themselves and others in relation to language, a definition of ‘bilingual’ was coined and used for this study as follows:

Someone who considers themselves as ‘speaking’ a language to the extent that they can use it confidently and achieve their communicative ends in a majority of everyday adult encounters, not restricted to tourism. It does not necessarily include specialised uses of the language such as in the law or business, and does not imply 100% accuracy.

All of the teachers interviewed had some experience of other languages, albeit in some cases minimal, but nine of them, for a variety of reasons, did not develop any significant proficiency. It would not be appropriate or useful for this study, then, to define as ‘monolingual’ only a teacher who knew not a single word of another language, since few if any of these exist. ‘Monolinguals’ as discussed here then, are those who do not
meet the above definition of ‘bilingual’, and the individuals concerned range from knowing only a few words of a second language to having limited proficiency. The ‘monolingual’ group also included those who had studied a language for up to six years at school, yet reported that they were unable to use it in any communicative situation. The results of the analysis of teachers’ language biographies are reported in Chapter 5.

4.8.2 Interview data

The interview data was transcribed by the researcher, and the thirty-one interviews yielded 343 pages of data, or almost 224,000 words. This data was analysed by repeated readings from which tentative themes emerged. Progressive re-readings ensued as well as re-listening to tapes for instances where extra-linguistic factors such as vocal emphasis, hesitation or tentativeness were deemed to be important. From this process eight themes emerged, of which three appeared particularly recurrent and fruitful, and these three key themes, in addition to the language biographies, form the data set for the thesis. The themes are:

1. Beliefs about language learning in general, and in relation to oneself and students.
2. Knowledge about language and language learning that inform teachers’ practice.
3. Beliefs about the role of the first language in second language teaching.

Once the three key themes were established, the data was trawled several times and excerpts of interviews relating to these themes were collated. This process resulted in three very long documents, and each was then extensively analysed to further categorise and code teacher comments. This was an iterative process, since a large number of potentially important and interesting sub-themes had to be identified, sorted, prioritised and ordered, as well as extraneous material excised. This process has been termed ‘progressive focussing’ (Tsui 2003:73). Rubin and Rubin (1995:247) refer to ‘domain analysis’ as a process of working out which ideas or concepts go together to form a cluster of related terms and processes, and then building these towards overarching themes. By the end of the analysis, the researcher was reasonably confident that a ‘saturation of knowledge’ (Kouritzin 2000) had been achieved over the 31 interviews, since no new significant themes were being uncovered.
There was a conflict between attempting comprehensive coverage and presenting a coherent yet faithful account of the range of knowledge and beliefs across the 31 teachers. This is typical of the process of analysing large amounts of rich data in a qualitative study (Burns 1996b, Rubin and Rubin 1995). A further process of analysis took place at the same time: namely a process of looking for patterns or similarities and differences between certain types of knowledge and beliefs, and certain types of language background. In this process the language biographies were the key tool, but it was a dialectic process in that analysis of the interviews revealed patterns and tendencies which led to adjustments in the language biography categories which had been established. For example the category of ‘circumstantial bilinguals’ (Valdés and Figueroa 1994) was established to include non-native speakers and early bilinguals, since there were clear differences between the experiences and knowledge of this group, and those of the NS bilinguals who were all ‘elective bilinguals’. These terms are explained further in Chapter 5.

4.9 Summary

This study set out to contribute to the growing body of research on teacher cognition by considering the contribution of language learning background to ESL teachers’ professional beliefs and knowledge, a topic which does not appear to have been hitherto addressed in a systematic way. Fang (1996) maintains that the methods used so far in teacher cognition research have not addressed the personal experiences of teachers and their influence on shaping their beliefs, and suggests that a focus on biography could contribute much to an increased understanding. The study used a qualitative, interpretive approach which was suited to uncovering unanticipated issues. Data was gathered by two main methods: a semi-structured interview and a language biography, and the relatively large number of subjects (thirty-one) provided a wide range of language backgrounds to analyse, in accordance with Kouritzin’s (2000) notion of ‘representivity’. The researcher’s ‘credibility’ was established via her ‘member’s competence’ (Woods 1996) and the ‘verifiability’ (Kouritzin 2000) of the data by the open-ended nature of the interviews and the lack of a marked power differential. The ‘credibility’ or ‘confirmability’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985) of the data was established by the careful development of the instruments and by the iterative and rigorous approach to data analysis. The aim, as with much qualitative research, was to develop understanding (Bogdan and Biklen 1998) so that “the decisions made and the conclusions reached are
justifiable in their own contexts” (Edge and Richards 1998:12). In this sense it can be claimed that, for the teachers studied, the researcher has a ‘warrant’ (Edge and Richards 1998) for the findings, and these are discussed in the following four chapters.
Chapter 5

Teachers’ language biographies

5.1 Introduction

In attempting to throw light on the issue of whether teachers’ languages have any relevance to their teaching of ESL, a major consideration for the study was how to document and interpret teachers’ language learning backgrounds. Categorisation of teachers’ language backgrounds had to be done in such a way as would permit patterns to be discerned in terms of similarities and differences between those teachers who are users of second languages and those who are not, and also between different kinds of language learning experiences.

A first and logical consideration was to compare levels of proficiency, but this in itself is problematic. First, it was not possible to obtain evidence such as results of standardised tests for each language, because of the number and variety of LOTEs known by the teachers – thirty-one in all, ranging from Anmatyerr to Uzbek (see Appendix D). A second way would have been to ask the teachers to rate themselves against the scales in widely-used tests of English as a second language. Although all the teachers would have had some familiarity with the ISLPR (International Second Language Proficiency Rating), and many with the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test, asking them to rate their languages in this way would not have guaranteed comparable standards, since they may have had widely varying understanding of the levels on each scale, and many would not have trained as raters. In line with the focus on teacher cognition from a phenomenographic perspective (Marton 1981) as outlined in Chapter 4, the teachers’ own perceptions of their language ability and their own ways of describing their proficiency were seen as more relevant than external measures. This approach is consistent with the qualitative, interpretive methodology taken in the study, since it allows participants themselves to describe their proficiency instead of the researcher imposing measures. For example, a teacher who claims that his or her French is “pretty hopeless really – I couldn’t really say anything in it” is expressing something different from a teacher who talks cheerfully about his or her 200-word vocabulary and the social functions s/he could attempt to perform in the
language, although both might achieve the same result in an objective test at elementary level. Both were classified as having ‘low proficiency’ in this study, but the affective differences were mapped on other parameters. Chapter 6 examines this data in more detail, linking teachers’ views of and descriptors of their own proficiency to their expressed views about their students’ learning. In this way issues of teacher-perceived proficiency are treated as being intimately linked to their personal histories and to their current professional beliefs, rather than simply as a ranking.

The 31 teachers who participated in the study varied widely from highly monolingual to highly multilingual, and a continuum is a better way to represent this range than a binary distinction between ‘bilingual’ and ‘monolingual’. However, for any meaningful statements to be made about differences between certain kinds of language background, it was considered necessary to draw a distinction between bilinguals (i.e. users of two or more languages), and monolinguals (i.e. users of English-only). For this I have drawn on the broad definition of individual bilinguality as given by Hamers and Blanc (2000:25) as: “...the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication.” Hamers and Blanc reserve the term ‘bilingualism’ to talk about societal bilingualism, which is not the main concern of this thesis. The above definition is important because it is broad: it does not attempt to define a necessary level of proficiency, as did earlier attempts at defining bilinguality (Bloomfield 1935, Haugen 1969). It focusses on access to more than one (thus including multilinguality), linguistic code (which does not restrict us to national languages, or even to languages, but includes varieties) as a means of social communication (focussing on purposeful use rather than technical competence, and side-stepping the question of native-speaker standards).

A broad definition of bilinguality was therefore developed for this study, as described in Chapter 4 and justified with reference to Hamers and Blanc (2000) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2000a). The definition given in Chapter 4 is repeated here:

Someone who considers themselves as ‘speaking’ two or more languages to the extent that they can use them confidently and achieve their communicative ends in a majority of everyday adult encounters, not restricted to tourism. It does not necessarily include specialised uses of the language such as in the law or business, and does not imply 100% accuracy.
A further consideration is that level of proficiency is only one parameter on which second language learning may be discussed. Given the focus of this study on teacher cognition, and specifically on experience as a contributor to knowledge and beliefs, other questions were also deemed to be important, such as how, when and in what contexts languages were learned, as well as affiliation (Rampton 1990) or other emotional resonances of languages. The researcher attempted to create the opportunity for teachers to talk spontaneously about not only proficiency but also the sociolinguistic and affective connections which their languages had for them. The categorisations which were used to organize the data reflect the complexity of the language biography data itself.

Teachers’ language biographies were mapped onto seven charts under the following headings:

- proficiency at highest achievement
- how a language was learned
- at what age a language was learned
- reason for learning a language
- affect towards the language
- frequency of current use of each language
- total number of languages each teacher had learned, or had the potential to learn.

These charts are not included verbatim, but a summary of key points about each teacher’s language biography is included as Appendix C.

5.2 The teachers’ self-reported proficiency and status as bilinguals

All teachers were asked “Do you speak any languages in addition to English?” and they were asked to describe their proficiency. Objective measures of proficiency were not used for the reasons given above. Teachers were, then, asked to give a description of their proficiency in their own words, and this was then used to categorise them as a high, medium or low proficiency user. The data has been arranged according to teachers’ first language(s), dominant language(s), and then other languages spoken to a high, medium or low proficiency. In several cases teachers indicated that their current proficiency was lower than at times in the past, and these languages were recorded as at
their highest proficiency, but coded in italics to indicate ‘lapsed’. First language refers to that learned first chronologically, whether in use now or not, consistent with Hamers and Blanc’s (2000:2) contention that it is “the first linguistic experience during the formative years of language development…” and dominant language refers to that in which the person feels most competent now in the widest range of domains. These terms are clarified thus to avoid the ambiguity which may otherwise arise in discussion of chronological acquisition and relative dominance. High, medium, or low proficiency are deliberately selected as ‘lay’ terms since the teachers used such a variety of descriptions that it is not possible to use more precise terms common in the profession such as ‘lower intermediate’. There is, of course, then, a certain amount of researcher discretion in allocating a language to a category based on a teacher’s description.

As analysis proceeded, it became clear that to report only on proficiency would be to give insufficient attention to the circumstances of achieving certain proficiency levels, and this realization led to the establishment of three main categories which were then found to be extremely useful in interpreting the interview data. These categories are: circumstantial bilinguals, elective bilinguals and monolinguals, and are explained below.

### 5.2.1 Circumstantial bilinguals

Of the thirty-one teachers, eight had a first language (that is, chronologically first-acquired as defined above) which was not English, and two of these had two first languages (Swedish/Finnish and English/Urdu, resulting from having ‘one parent one language’ as a child). Only three had a dominant language which was not English (Swedish, Spanish and Urdu), but two of these reported equal dominance, considering themselves to be balanced bilinguals (Baker 2001) in Spanish/English and Urdu/English. Three teachers considered themselves to be non-native speakers of English, although all three had near-native proficiency. Another three could be described as ‘balanced bilinguals’, including the two mentioned above and another whose dominant language was English, but who reported native proficiency in Schwäbian. Three of those with a mother tongue other than English but who were now dominant in English were children of European migrants to Australia: one was born here and two arrived at ages 2 and 3.
These eight teachers, while they are diverse, form a loose group which was categorised as ‘circumstantial bilinguals’. This term was coined by Valdés and Figueroa (1994:10) (with its counterpoint ‘elective bilinguals’) to represent those “…who, because of their circumstances, find that they must learn another language in order to survive”. (See also Chapter 3.1.4.)

The eight teachers meet this description since they either grew up in a bilingual society (Greta /Rebecca /Shanaz\textsuperscript{13}, emigrated as children or as adults (Elide/ Ofra/ Shanaz /Lidia /Simone) or were born in Australia to a family which spoke another language (Helena). Their acquisition of two languages was thus determined by societal and familial factors rather than by individual choice. These circumstantial bilinguals include three non-native speakers (NNS), two who profess to be balanced bilinguals, and three who grew up as immigrants in Australia speaking another language which they have retained to varying degrees. All but one (Lidia) had studied other languages by choice (elective bilingualism) as well as the two or more in which they are circumstantial bilinguals. A factor which they have in common is that they all grew up with a language other than English, either on its own (Lidia) or in tandem with English. All have experience of using two languages in their immediate family life, seven as children and five as adults. They have experience of code-switching as a normal part of life. They all have experience of being a non-English speaking immigrant: seven are immigrants themselves to Australia, three as adults and four as small children: another one was born here of immigrant parents. In these experiences they differ from the rest of the bilinguals who grew up with English alone and began to learn other languages only during their schooling.

5.2.2 Elective bilinguals

Fourteen teachers were classified as elective bilinguals. All are native English-speakers, having grown up with English as their only language, and having learned other languages from secondary school onwards. To be classified in this group their description of their proficiency had to include self-reported evidence that they could function competently, and be seen by others to function, in another language, as in the definition of bilinguality given above. A decision was made, however, to include in this

\textsuperscript{13} Pseudonyms are used for all teachers’ names.
category teachers whose once-high proficiency had lapsed down to ‘medium’ through lack of use, but who expressed confidence that their competence would return with exposure and practice. In this decision I am expressing a belief in a distinction between languages which are ‘lost’ to their user, such as school study of French of which nothing remains, or a parental language which is no longer understood, and languages which are merely dormant.

The languages they spoke to a ‘high’ or ‘medium’ proficiency were for the most part those they had studied at high school, to HSC level, and/or at university. Naturally these languages are restricted to those available at the time the teacher was studying, and include French (12 teachers) German (6), Latin (5), Ancient Greek (1), Italian (1), Indonesian (2), Spanish (1) and Japanese (1). The last three languages had all been studied within the last 5 years, and the first five reflect the small range of languages on offer in schools and universities in the 1960s and 1970s when most of the teachers discussed here were studying as young people. Those whose languages included Latin or Ancient Greek also had competence in a modern language, since, as elaborated below, those with competence in a non-spoken classical language alone did not qualify as ‘bilinguals’ for the purposes of this study. In addition to formal study through school or university, the fourteen native-speaker elective bilinguals had learned other languages in informal contexts, such as through living overseas, or in Australian adult education courses. These included Uzbek, Turkish, Nepali, Khmer, Mandarin and West African Krio, as well as all of the modern languages mentioned above: French, German, Italian, Indonesian, Spanish and Japanese.

### 5.2.3 Monolinguals

Nine of the teachers were classified for this study as ‘monolinguals’ for the reason that they had never reached a functional level of competence (defined as above) in any language other than English. This does not of course mean that they had not studied, and learned, bits of other languages. Although there is no data to tell us, it is possible that monolinguals who know not a single word of another language are rare, particularly among educated people, and more so among language teachers. It is necessary, then, to have a working definition of ‘monolingual’, which here is any teacher who did not meet the above definition of ‘bilingual’. It is also important to acknowledge that the language abilities of the monolingual group discussed here are best represented as a continuum,
from those who know literally only a dozen words of another language to those who achieved a low level of proficiency in one or more language(s).

Three had medium, but lapsed, proficiency in French deriving from school study, and eight had low level (all lapsed) proficiency in languages which included French, Spanish, Latin, Japanese, and Anmatyerr (a Central Australian language). One had no proficiency beyond a few words in Russian picked up from a Russian-speaking partner. Three, like some of the bilinguals, had had contact with other languages - Hindi, Swedish and German - but had not acquired any part of them. One of the monolinguals reported a high proficiency in Latin, which she had taught to HSC level, but she is included as a monolingual for two reasons: that a user of Latin, which is a language without a modern spoken form, cannot be included in the definition of ‘bilingual’ being used here, and secondly that she reported lack of success in the two other languages she had attempted to learn. Including a teacher in the monolingual group does not, however, mean that the study has ignored what language learning experience s/he has had. The monolinguals’ language learning experience is analysed in later chapters as is that of the bilinguals, and hence the contribution of the above teacher’s expertise in Latin is reported and interpreted.

This section, then, has described the proficiency in languages other than English of the teachers in the study and categorised them into three broad groups. The first group consists of eight circumstantial bilinguals who (except for one) grew up with two or more languages and who all have high-level proficiency in at least two languages. This group includes three non-native speakers of English, and all are either immigrants to Australia or children of immigrants. Their proficiency tends to be higher than that of the second group, but equally importantly, their experience of becoming bilingual is qualitatively different from theirs. The second group is termed elective bilinguals and consists of fourteen teachers who grew up with English as their only language (native speakers) but who later acquired one or more languages to a medium or high level of proficiency. The third group is termed monolinguals and includes nine teachers who have low or no proficiency in a language other than English. Bilingualism here includes multilingualism, and both bilingualism and monolingualism are recognised as relative rather than absolute terms, best talked about as occurring on continua of proficiency from ‘most to least bilingual’ to ‘most to least monolingual’.
5.3 How the teachers learned languages

It is widely recognised that there are many ways of acquiring languages, including early exposure in the family, formal study at school or university, study in less formal adult education contexts, travel or work in a country where the language is spoken, formal ‘immersion’ programs in the L2 environment and self-directed study. These ‘routes to bilingualism’ were discussed in Chapter 3.1. These possibilities are not mutually exclusive of course, and as will be seen in the following report of how the teachers learned languages, they frequently overlap. The main ways of acquiring languages which these teachers had experienced were: in the family; at school or university; in-country learning; through teaching the language.

Languages learned within the family included English for twenty-four teachers and a range of other languages for the circumstantial bilinguals: Swedish, Finnish, German, Spanish, Cantonese, Schwäbisch, Polish, Urdu, Panjabi, Italian and Austrian.

All but three teachers had studied one or more languages at school and/or university. Of these three, one was an early bilingual, one had achieved a high level of proficiency in another language in adult life, and one was monolingual. The twenty-eight teachers who had studied languages at school had developed a variety of levels of proficiency in them, as described in Chapter 5.1. Twelve teachers, from all three categories, had studied languages in adult education contexts which included the Workers’ Education Association (WEA), non-credit courses in university language centres and continuing education centres. Eighteen teachers had had the experience of learning, or ‘picking up’ one or more languages informally, through living, travelling and/or working in a country where it or they were spoken. Five teachers had experience of formal immersion programs, where the target language is the medium of study, and these included a teacher who grew up in Pakistan studying at an English-medium school, another who attended an English-medium school in Hong Kong and three teachers who lived in France and studied at a French-medium language centre or university.

Eight teachers had the experience of in-country learning in a combination of formal and informal learning, and of course these eight include those five with in-country immersion experience. Four teachers had the experience of living in a country and not learning the language - Hindi, Khmer, Malay, Mende (West Africa) - and in all four
cases this occurred with the spouse’s posting to the country. All but one of these teachers were speakers of other languages and so the non-learning does not necessarily reflect an inability or unwillingness to learn. In three cases they were surrounded by English speakers, and in the case of Mende, the teacher did acquire fluency in the lingua franca of Krio but reported having insufficient contact with Mende speakers.

Eight teachers had taught languages at high school or at TAFE colleges, which, while not strictly speaking a language learning mechanism, does of course tend to promote language maintenance and extension through active use. Two of these had taught English (their second language) at high school in Chile and Hong Kong and six had taught one or more of French, German, Italian and Japanese in Australian schools and TAFE colleges.

‘Other’ ways of learning languages included one teacher who learned some Czech from her Czech-speaking husband and supplemented this with studying from a teach-yourself Czech book and tapes. Another trained as an Indonesian teacher but never taught it, another teacher learned some Russian receptively while living in an ex-Soviet republic but actively trying not to acquire Russian, and another learned a little Russian from his spouse.

As mentioned above, the various ways of learning languages overlap, and to illustrate the normality of this phenomenon two examples follow. Beatrice studied French at school and then at university. She then accompanied her husband to France where she studied the language further in an immersion program as well as actively pursuing informal practice in the community and working privately with books and tapes. Later she used French as a lingua franca while living in Cambodia. Colin, a keen language learner, took up Japanese at an adult education centre at the age of 27, and went on to gain various certificates in it at language centres. He spent some time in Japan learning the language from informal contact, and is now working towards an MA in Japanese grammar as well as teaching Japanese at a TAFE college.

5.4 When teachers learned their languages

Since age is sometimes thought to be a factor in the success or lack of it in language learning, as discussed in Chapter 3.1 under ‘routes to bilingualism’, teachers’ language
biographies were analysed to find out when, in chronological terms, they had learned their other languages. For the purposes of this Chapter, only languages which had been the focus of serious intent to learn were considered. That is, those where the teacher had picked up only a few words from contact with its speakers are not included here.

Time periods used were: up to 5 years old (reflecting pre-school home environment), 5 - 12 years (primary school), 12 - 18 years (high school), 18 - 21 (generally but not always reflecting formal university study), after 21 years and ‘unknown’ where the researcher failed to obtain the data.

Overall the clearest division in experience was between the circumstantial bilinguals and the rest of the teachers (the elective bilinguals and the monolinguals). The reason for this is that the circumstantial bilinguals are defined as those for whom circumstances dictated the acquisition of two or more languages, and all but one of these teachers spoke two or more languages from early childhood. Hence in the ‘up to 5’ category, the eight circumstantial bilinguals had fourteen languages between them. All the fourteen elective bilinguals and all the nine monolinguals only learned English in this period.

In the 5 - 12 age group, again all the eight circumstantial bilinguals learned or used a language other than English, and seven of these learned or were using English as well. Of the other twenty-three teachers, only one had learned a language (French) in this age group when her family lived in Geneva for three years and she attended a French-medium school.

In the high school years of ages 12 - 18, the languages studied by the elective bilinguals and the monolinguals tended to reflect those offered in school curricula in the 1960s and 1970s as mentioned in Chapter 5.1, and included French, German, Latin and Ancient Greek. Those circumstantial bilinguals who were schooled in Australia also showed this pattern of studying the commonly available languages, while the three teachers who grew up outside Australia studied English, German and Finnish at this age. Twenty-nine out of thirty-one teachers had studied one or more languages during this period.

In the 18 - 21 age period, when most teachers were at university, the languages learned vary a little, and include Italian, Indonesian and Spanish as well as those mentioned at school age. The greatest variety of languages learned occurs in the ‘after 21’ period, and
this reflects greater choices available to adults than to younger people, more divergent life paths, and, since most teachers were middle-aged, a longer time period. This period includes languages learned as a result of working or living in other language communities (Uzbek, Turkish, Khmer, Anmatyerr, Nepali, Krio) which figure very little in formal language curricula in Australia. They also include languages which are more likely now than thirty years ago to be offered at universities and/or in adult education institutions, and these include Spanish, Indonesian, Modern Greek and Japanese.

5.5 Reasons why the teachers learned languages

In considering second language acquisition, a great deal of attention has been paid to the role of motivation in language learning (Gardner and Lambert 1972), and hence the data was analysed to find out reasons why teachers learned and/or studied their languages. The categories developed from the data were:

- spoken by family or carers (8)
- part of the compulsory curriculum at any level (29)
- own choice to travel or work (23)
- others’ choice to travel or work (5)
- with the specific intention of having the experience of learning a second language (4)

In the ‘spoken by family or carers’ category, the data is much the same as that in the above Chapter 5.4 ‘under 5’ category, in that the eight circumstantial bilinguals were exposed to two or more languages and the elective bilinguals and the monolinguals were exposed to only English from family or carers. A major category was, predictably, ‘part of the school curriculum’ and twenty-nine of the thirty-one teachers had studied languages for this reason. Again, predictably, all but one of the monolinguals had studied languages as part of their education but had not succeeded in achieving anything beyond a low level of proficiency.

A total of twenty-three teachers had made a choice to learn a language for travel or work, and this includes those who chose to study languages as part of their university education, those who went overseas and learned the language there, and those who
studied in order to prepare for a holiday or extended trip. Of the twenty-three, six were circumstantial bilinguals, twelve were elective bilinguals and five were monolinguals.

In the category of ‘others’ choice to travel or work’ are included three teachers who learned a language because of their partner’s posting to that country, one of whom undertook a degree in Bahasa Indonesia thirty years after having lived in Malaysia (Bahasa Melayu as such being unavailable). Also included is the teacher who lived with her parents in Geneva for three years, and a fifth teacher who studied Mandarin to prepare for a visit to her son in China.

Four teachers had enrolled in a language course since becoming ESL teachers with the express intention of finding out what it was like to study a second language in order to better understand their students. This recalls the ‘language learning experience’ or LLE which sometimes forms part of postgraduate TESOL studies and is referred to in Chapter 3.5. Three undertook Spanish, and one Italian. The latter was in fact a structured LLE as part of her Graduate Diploma, but since it was an elective, it is included with the others who sought a learner’s perspective. All, however, acknowledged that the experience, though valuable, differed in quality from that of their students because of minimal contact hours and the absence of the urgency and stress associated with learning a second language in a new country.

By far the most common reason for acquiring another language was as part of the curriculum, (twenty-nine teachers), followed by ‘own choice to travel or work’ (twenty-three teachers). The categories here are not mutually exclusive, and a teacher may have first studied a language because it was compulsory, and gone on to study it at university out of choice. Two of the circumstantial bilinguals studied their family language formally at school or university from choice. Again we see the complexity and diversity of the teachers’ language biographies.

5.6 The teachers’ affect towards their languages

Occasionally during the interviews a particular affect, either positive or negative, was expressed towards a language either spontaneously or in response to a question about it, but this data is uneven. It will be considered under the three broad groupings of teachers. The circumstantial bilinguals expressed both positive and negative affect
towards their languages. For example, Greta loves English because of its idiom, and she quoted examples which delighted her: “shonky” and “cheap as chips”. She disliked German, though, which she also speaks to a high level, because she finds its grammar too rigid, and she also disliked Italian, in which she had considered herself to have failed. Lidia, a balanced bilingual in English and Spanish, talked of how she prefers talking about sensitive or personal issues in English (her second language) because it distances her and she feels “it’s not me so I can express more things”. Simone grew up speaking Schwäbian and finds High German to be “harsh and stilted”, while French is “a lovely language”, and Japanese is “fascinating” because of its very different syntax. Shanaz loves Urdu because she finds it elegant and is a keen reader of its poetry, while she finds Panjabi, the language of the region where she grew up, to be rustic, homely, expressive and direct, and it evokes different emotions for her. Ofra, who still speaks some Polish with her mother, finds its vocabulary wonderfully expressive, and they use it to “share secrets” in front of non-Polish speakers.

Among the elective bilinguals, seven expressed positive affect and three expressed negative affect. In general, in languages they had studied and had success in, they tended to both like the language and to have enjoyed learning it. Two of the negative opinions expressed were due to stressful learning experiences, one successful and the other unsuccessful. The issue of affect towards the learning of a language is discussed in Chapter 6. An interesting negative affect was expressed about Russian by the teacher who had lived in Uzbekistan in the early 1990s. She was wholly focussed on learning Uzbek and lived with an Uzbek family, and, relating to them as she did, took on their attitudes to Russian as the language of the (then) USSR and the lingua franca of foreigners and other Soviet citizens. She actively resisted learning it and delighted in surprising locals with her fluency in and preference for Uzbek. She, like Ofra, also sees languages as something which can be used to “share secrets” between speakers. Other affect expressed by this group included towards French as “a gorgeous language”, and to Japanese - “I absolutely love it”. Colin told of his great delight in fooling German speakers that he was either a native speaker of German, or of one of its varieties. One of this group expressed a positive view of Latin for its instrumental use, seeing it as being useful for analysing English grammar.

It is to be expected that language teachers would have an interest in their subject, and find language in general, second languages, or English in particular to be fascinating on
a personal as well as professional basis. Several comments bear out this expectation, along the lines of “I love language” and “I’ve always been interested in language”. Of more interest for the present thesis, though, are the instances where teachers referred to an interest in foreign or second languages in a way which suggests they see it as personal and private rather than an integral part of their professional persona. Examples are:

I’ve just always been interested in language and the development of language and roots of words…[B]ut I think that is a personal thing and I think it’s pretty much across the board with ESL teachers. (Hilary)

… being too shy to go out and learn the language, living in the country - but it was always there - always something I wanted to do… I always had this hankering to learn the language. (Mary)

I’m interested in language - it’s actually a hobby I would say. There’s a thing out of Macquarie Uni Stylewise? [sic – Australian Style] do you know that? (yes) I like that, you know, it’s that lovely bedtime reading to me. (Pamela)

[being bilingual and bicultural] It’s just my personality. It’s been that happy marriage of a strange personality doing a strange job, teaching English! (laugh) (Shanaz)

… I’ve always liked them [languages]. That was just my little thing I was good at but now I’ve shelved them. But when I retire I’ll get back to them for sure. (Penny)

Penny’s comment here paints her languages as a personal indulgence, despite the fact that she was a teacher of French and German for many years. Elsewhere in the interview she talks about how these languages were not valued when she was teaching them in a disadvantaged school where interest in LOTE was low. They appear not to be relevant to her current work in ESL and so they have quietly slipped to the back of the shelf, perhaps to be retrieved as a retirement project, on a par with pruning the roses.

Language as represented in these five comments is a “hobby”, associated with the private time “bedtime reading” affords, and talked about in diminutive, self-deprecatory terms: “a strange job” “this hankering” “my little thing” “a personal thing”. One does not “hanker” to learn structural engineering or accountancy. It is a verb which collocates with private (and selfish) yearnings, such as becoming an actor or an artist. The use of terms like this thus divests language and language learning of connection with the serious world of the workplace.
Among the monolinguals, two teachers expressed a positive affect towards languages which helped her to analyse and explain English grammar. Both included Latin, and one included French and Spanish. Three had negative views of Russian, Spanish and Japanese for being “very hard”. Two had negative affect towards their school learning of French which was, in one case, so “unrelated to the reality of its use” that when she haltingly attempted a simple question in Paris, she reported being overwhelmed by the fact that her interlocutor understood. The other, Michelle, had such a poor learning experience in French that she found it “useless” and expressed a view of herself as “hopeless” at language learning.

The opinions expressed here, both positive and negative, show clearly how language acquisition and learning are more than cerebral activities: they also have emotional resonances. The circumstantial bilinguals for the most part had very firm views on how each of their languages formed part of their sense of self. Those who had success in learning languages tend to talk about fascination, love, and intrigue, and those who had not had success seemed to see it as a personal failing rather than a purely academic one.

5.7 Frequency of use of languages other than English

A question about whether teachers currently used their languages, and if so how frequently, was included for two reasons. Firstly, frequency of use informs ‘proficiency’ since unused languages tend to deteriorate, and this tendency was categorised in Chapter 5.2 as ‘lapsed’. (As noted there, there is a difference between a language which has been lost, and one which is merely ‘dormant’.) Secondly, the researcher wished to discover whether there was any professional opportunity for teachers to use their second language skills, as part of the enquiry into the contention that the ESL profession has a monolingual perspective.

Four of the circumstantial bilinguals use their other language(s) daily. Lidia uses English at work and Spanish at home, but is used to code-switching with her husband and children when the topic or occasion warrants it. Rebecca teaches a bilingual class, so she uses Cantonese, Mandarin and English in her teaching, as well as speaking to her husband and children in Cantonese and English. Elide uses Italian at home as well as teaching it at a TAFE college, and Shanaz uses Urdu with her family.
Two of the elective bilinguals use another language daily in teaching. Anna teaches French at a TAFE college, and Colin teaches Italian and Japanese also at a TAFE college, but neither uses these languages in a home context. A further six teachers use one of their languages “occasionally” and a total of ten bilinguals do not use their other language(s) at all. Naturally the nine monolinguals do not use another language on any kind of basis.

Out of thirty-one teachers, six use another language daily and six “occasionally” while nineteen do not use any other language: ten because there is no opportunity or demand for it, and nine because they are monolinguals. If we see languages as a resource in general (Ruiz 1988), then clearly for most of these teachers’ their languages are an unused resource. Over half of the bilinguals do not use their other languages at all, and another quarter use them only occasionally.

5.8 The number of languages teachers have learned or had sustained contact with

An effort was made to elicit information about any kind of language contact the teachers had had, partly to ensure comprehensive gathering of data, partly to ensure that any modesty on the part of respondents did not obscure the existence of language skills, and partly to attempt to understand the breadth of language experience in the whole group of thirty-one teachers. Any contact with languages is a potential source of learning. Non-learning of an available language can be interpreted not only according to individual motives, but, also, given the general societal disregard for languages in Australia and the ESL profession as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3.3, from a societal and professional perspective. A further, related issue is that English-only teaching in ESL is most commonly justified on the basis of the impracticality of offering language instruction in every immigrant learner’s first language. This argument presumes that such a wide variety of languages is not available among the teacher population. It was relevant for this reason to analyse how many languages are available, or potentially available.

All languages with which teachers had had contact were recorded (see Appendix D) including those where only a few words were learned, or there was sustained contact but none was learned, for example living in Cambodia but not learning any Khmer.
Language varieties are treated here as two languages - for example Hindi/Urdu, Schwäbian/German - for the reason that a high degree of sociocultural knowledge is needed to operate successfully in both, even though linguistically some may be very similar. English has been deducted from the sum totals of languages given here, since, even though it was learned as a second language by some teachers, it is a pre-requisite for teaching ESL. It is teachers’ additional languages which are of interest here.

Circumstantial bilinguals: eight teachers had had contact with a total of 35 languages, of which 21 were spoken to a high or medium proficiency, and fourteen other languages to a low proficiency. There were no incidences of sustained contact with a language but no learning of it with this group.

Elective bilinguals: fourteen teachers had had contact with a total of 63 languages, of which they spoke 33 to a high or medium proficiency. They had either low proficiency or some contact with 30 languages.

Monolinguals: nine teachers had had contact with a total of sixteen languages other than English. This group, as defined in Chapter 5.1, spoke no other languages well and had had little or no success (low proficiency or none) in the sixteen languages with which they had collectively had sustained contact.

Two teachers claimed to understand bits of languages which were close to languages they spoke, in the sense of ‘interlingual distance’, which is a measure of the structural closeness of languages to each other (Crystal 1987:371). Ofra, a Polish speaker, understands some Russian and Yugoslav (not specified as Serbian, Croatian or other), and Shanaz, a speaker of Urdu and reader of Arabic, maintained that she could understand some words in Bosnian, Turkish and Farsi. Interlingual distance also featured in teachers’ language biographies in that some teachers had either decided to learn a language which was similar to one they already knew, or mentioned that they had found a particular language easy to learn because it was similar to one they already spoke. There is contention among researchers in second language acquisition (Ellis 1994) about the effects of language distance on learning. Despite difficulties in establishing a complete framework for comparing languages (Crystal 1987), Kellerman (1977) maintains that learners’ perceptions of language distance, or their personal
psychotypology, are important indicators of how crosslinguistic influence (Sharwood Smith and Kellerman 1986) will manifest.

5.9 Summary of teachers’ language biographies

All 31 of the teachers interviewed had had some contact with languages other than English, but the definition which was given above to distinguish between ‘bilingual’ and ‘monolingual’ teachers was employed as a measure of meaningful second language ability which could be used for purposeful social communication (Hamers and Blanc 2000). Any such arbitrary classifications are problematic, especially when it is not feasible to use standardised tests or competency statements. In deciding who was bilingual and who was monolingual, the researcher was guided by the teachers’ own estimations of their proficiency as well as by any additional information which supported that estimation, for example a teacher having worked at a particular job in a second language. The following paragraphs summarise the teachers’ language backgrounds.

The 31 teachers between them reported a total of 114 instances of learning, or having sustained contact with, languages other than English. Counting each linguistic code once (ie. although Spanish was spoken or learned by 10 teachers, it is counted once), reveals that a total of 31 languages or linguistic codes figured in the teachers’ biographies, and these are listed in Appendix D. (The fact that 31 teachers had learned 31 languages is a coincidence and no importance should be attached to it.) Since ‘contact’ was defined as living with a speaker of the language, or in the country where the language was spoken, this represents actual learning or substantial potential for learning 31 languages. If we eliminate the classical languages of Latin and Ancient Greek we are left with 29 languages which could potentially be of direct benefit in the teaching of ESL.\(^{14}\)

Eight teachers were classed as ‘circumstantial bilinguals’ and had all grown up with a language other than English, had experience of using two familial languages in their daily lives, and had experience as a non-English speaking background (NESB)

\(^{14}\) ‘Direct benefit’ means here that these twenty-nine languages may be among those spoken by ESL students, and hence in theory available for use in the teaching process. This is clearly not the case with Latin and Ancient Greek, but, as will be seen in Chapter 7, classical languages act as a resource for teachers in assisting with their understanding of English grammar and lexis.
immigrant. (The common term NESB is little-used in this thesis as it is perceived to denote a deficit rather than as asset, and because it is inappropriate when five of the circumstantial bilinguals now have English as their dominant language.) Three of the circumstantial bilinguals described themselves as non-native speakers, and some of the findings in the following chapters relate specifically to them. Fourteen teachers were classed as ‘elective bilinguals’ and were distinguished by having had English as their only language until adolescence, when they began to study languages at high school. As well as differing in age of acquisition from the circumstantial bilinguals, they differ in manner of acquisition, having largely studied languages as part of a formal curriculum rather than acquiring them in the family or via migration. Inclusion in this group does not imply the preclusion of other kinds of learning in addition, and indeed ten of the elective bilinguals also had experience of learning languages by less formal adult education or by living or travelling in the relevant country.

Nine of the teachers were classed as monolinguals since they did not meet the definition of ‘bilingual’ given at the beginning of this chapter. All nine had some experience of language learning, but none had reached beyond a ‘low’ level of proficiency.

In terms of motivation, 29 teachers had learned languages because they were part of the curriculum. Twenty three teachers had made a conscious choice to learn languages in order to work or travel in the country, or to teach the language, and four had a specific desire to experience second language learning to inform their teaching of ESL. A total of 26 out of 31 teachers, then, had demonstrated a commitment to language learning deriving from personal choice, which suggests that at least on a personal level, language learning was not seen as irrelevant by this group of ESL teachers, but as something of keen interest to them.

The affect expressed towards languages, not surprisingly, tended to be strongest in those who had grown up with languages other than English, or in other ways lived in them. Some of the terms used suggested strong emotional ties to particular languages, and other languages were disliked because they were seen to lack a familial warmth. Other cases where affect was expressed were where the language was studied from choice and included the expression of enjoyment or delight as might be derived from a hobby. Negative affect to a particular language also tended to be tied to unpleasant or
unsuccessful learning experiences, and in one case to its status as a language of a dominant colonizing power.

Chapter 5 has reported and summarised the teachers’ language biographies and established the three main categories of circumstantial bilinguals (who include three non-native speakers of English), elective bilinguals, and monolinguals. These groupings are related in the following chapters to the data extracted from the interviews. Key points shown by the biographies are that all the teachers had undertaken formal language learning at some point, whether it was successful or unsuccessful; that their language biographies are rich, varied and complex with many overlapping features; and that between them the teachers had learned, or had had real potential for learning, a large number of languages (thirty-one languages, of which twenty-nine are spoken in the world today).
Chapter 6

Teachers’ beliefs about second language learning

How teachers operate as educational linguists must reflect their views of language in learning that have received virtually no empirical investigation. (Brumfit 1997:170)

Chapter 6 reports the findings which relate to teachers’ expressed beliefs about second language learning. As reported in Chapter 4 (Method), the themes which are discussed in the findings emerged from in-depth analysis of the interviews, rather than being pre-established by the researcher. One of the most recurrent themes, and one which is considered important for illuminating the research questions, was teachers’ beliefs about the nature of second language learning – what it is, what it involves, and how they see their own and their students’ second language learning. The clearest and most commonly-occurring aspect of this theme concerned the ease or difficulty of learning a second language. There was no question in the interview which asked specifically about this, although questions were asked about the comparative difficulties of English and other languages for students. Views and beliefs emerged in answer to other questions and as part of anecdotes and narratives about teachers’ own teaching and learning experience. The kinds of beliefs reported on here are unlikely to be amenable to direct questioning, and the kinds of data which was obtained obliquely is richer and more likely to be a reflection of teachers’ authentic feelings than a direct question such as “how easy or difficult is it to learn a second language?” Such a question would be too broad, untied to specific experiences, and liable to be answered with a view to producing an ‘acceptable answer’. In contrast, it can be claimed that the beliefs expressed here are less likely to be tailored to what the respondent thinks is a good answer, since they were expressed as part of the teachers’ spontaneous discourse.

The review of the literature on teacher cognition (Chapter 3.5) showed how an understanding of how teachers think about their work is important in developing an understanding of teaching and teachers. In the findings reported here, it is apparent how teachers’ differing language learning experience appears to have an effect on how they conceive of their subject matter, and of the process of learning it. The main difference here lay between the bilinguals, both circumstantial and elective, and the monolinguals: that is, between those with substantial and successful second language learning
experience, and those with minimal and largely unsuccessful second language learning experience.

This chapter is divided into two main sections: beliefs expressed about teachers’ own second language learning, and beliefs expressed about students’ learning of English as a second language.

6.1 Beliefs about teachers’ own second language learning

Expressed beliefs have been divided into those expressed by bilinguals (circumstantial and elective) and monolinguals.

6.1.1 Bilinguals

Beliefs expressed by the bilingual teachers which emerged as worthy of examination included those about their own language proficiency; those about their discontinued attempts at learning a language, or failures; about their own bilinguality; about progress and attrition in language learning, and about the difficulty of language learning.

6.1.1.1 Bilinguals’ views of their own language proficiency

Bilingual teachers described their language proficiency in confident, unemotional terms which suggested speaking and learning other languages is a normal part of life. The term ‘neutral’ is employed here to refer to this objective, unemotive way in which bilinguals talked about their language proficiency. It is intended to express the idea of the normality of language learning; the impression that the bilinguals see it as ‘unmarked’. These suggestions of neutrality and normality will be contrasted below with the ways monolinguals described their second language learning. Neutrality of description was particularly evident with the circumstantial bilinguals, most of whom were among the most multilingual of the teachers. Thus Greta, a high-level speaker of four languages, compares her proficiency in three of them in terms of her level of ‘comfort’ in speaking them.

…so at home we spoke Swedish all the time, Swedish is the one I’m more comfortable with - than Finnish - I’m more comfortable with English than I am with Finnish actually as well. (Greta)
So too, Simone, Shanaz, Elide and Helena describe their levels of proficiency in various languages directly, without either self-promotion or modesty and also without negative inferences:

…then I spent 18 months in France so… I’m virtually fluent in that … not as good as English, but - I don’t know all the ins and outs - but I can say whatever I want to say. (Simone)

…well I speak Urdu and Hindi ...I speak Panjabi fluently and I read and write Urdu therefore I read Arabic. (Shanaz)

my Italian is, you know, basic Italian. I wouldn’t be able to sit down and have a political conversation with people, but a normal conversation - no sweat. (Elide)

because my listening skills were quite good (Int: having been in France?) yeah and that was my strength. (Helena)

The phrases which have been interpreted as confident and neutral in the above utterances include the following: “I’m comfortable with X”, “I’m fluent in X”, “I can say whatever I want to say”, “I speak X”, “I speak X fluently”, “I read X”, “I can have…a normal conversation”, “my listening skills were good”, “that was my strength”. The phrases are neither boastful nor unnecessarily modest, and the suprasegmental aspects of their delivery (stress and intonation), as analysed on audiotape, reflect this stance of normality.

Where the bilinguals had lower levels of proficiency the same neutrality of description was evident:

Oh I suppose I reached a level in Bahasa of… I’d be a good intermediate - no - lower level intermediate- because again that language has a lot of nuances and…. (Beatrice)

[re learning French] … I enjoyed it a lot and did well but I didn't enjoy my experience of trying to communicate with French native speakers all that much. I enjoy the sound of it and generally enjoyed learning it but am not good enough to find it particularly satisfying. (Paula)

My Indonesian’s good, my Khmer is - I just studied for 8 or 9 months when I was there so I was able to communicate it on a basic level - yeah - just the spoken sort of thing - street language. (Felicity)
As will become clearer on examining similar statements by the monolinguals, the bilinguals reported here seem to be quite comfortable reporting their language achievements, even if these are not high, in unemotive and objective terms. There is a lack of false modesty which emerges in these frank statements: “I did well”, “I’d be a good intermediate”, “my Indonesian’s good”, and later, on comparing them with the monolinguals, it will be suggested that this frank and neutral stance may arise from the confidence which the successful learning of at least one language can give.

6.1.1.2 Bilinguals’ views of discontinued attempts at learning languages or failures
As reported in Chapter 5, the twenty-two bilinguals between them reported 98 instances of learning, studying or having sustained contact with other languages. In 54 of these instances of language learning, the languages were, or had been, spoken to a high or medium level (functional competence). In the case of the other 44 instances the bilinguals gained only a low proficiency in a language studied, either through discontinuing study through circumstances or perceived failure to learn.

Statements by fourteen of the bilinguals were identified as describing these circumstances, and in all fourteen examples a similar accepting stance was noted. In other words, their attempts to learn languages which did not go very far were reported unemotionally as were the successes described in the previous section. Orla describes “having a go” at Indonesian and Italian, in neither of which was she very successful, while Fiona studied German for a year and thoroughly enjoyed it, but has now lost it all. Neither seems unduly perturbed by not achieving a high level of proficiency, and both are competent speakers of other languages. Rebecca’s and Simone’s descriptions are similar:

I’ve learned a bit of German, when I was at uni, but it’s just very basic - tourist sort of thing…I just happened to take that because I thought it’s interesting. (Rebecca)

I had a little look at Spanish - I tried Spanish the Silent Way but I never continued - but that was great, I loved doing that because I, well because I knew French it was really easy to pick up, you know. (Simone)

Here the point is (as later contrasted with the way monolinguals talk about their attempts) there is no shame in trying and not getting very far, perhaps because bilinguals recognise that this is just a step on the road they have travelled before. Where a bilingual has failed in a language learning attempt, with one or two exceptions this is
not a cause for self-recrimination or breast-beating, and is also reported in a neutral, unmarked way.

I did try to learn one of the [African] tribal languages, and that I found [difficult] … I couldn’t get past the greetings and one or two of the phrases. (Anna)

I really didn’t learn any Hindi at all - again picked up the odd word, but the household help also could speak English. (Beatrice)

Anna was already a fluent speaker and teacher of French, and had achieved competence in the lingua franca of Krio when she made her attempt with Mende. Beatrice had previously achieved success with French and Indonesian, using both confidently with their speakers in the countries where she was posted. For neither of them, then, were these unsuccessful encounters with further languages in any way defining of them personally as language learners. The bilinguals’ previous successes seem to provide assurance that they are competent language learners, and subsequent failures or abandoned attempts do not seem to threaten that assurance in most cases. Again, this feature of the bilinguals’ discourse will be contrasted with that of the monolinguals in a later section.

6.1.1.3 Bilinguals’ beliefs about progress and attrition

Comments by seventeen of the bilinguals suggest a perspective that progress in language learning is possible and unremarkable. They also suggest that when languages lapse through lack of use, that this too is a natural part of the process. Several comments are made indicating that language lapse (or attrition) can be remedied – not without effort, but as a consequence of will. A sense is thus gained from the respondents that language learning has a natural flow and ebb. People learn languages and sometimes they forget them, and with some application they can re-learn them.

Greta, a non-native speaker, describes nonchalantly how her English progressed from ‘not very good’ to a level where she now has postgraduate qualifications gained in English, and speaking it is “nothing”, meaning it presents no difficulty for her:

My spoken English wasn’t very good when I did come here, [to Australia]…. [now] I feel very comfortable with English - it’s nothing - I don’t think in Swedish and translate and all this stuff. (Greta)
Beatrice told how her level in French deteriorated after being “nearly bilingual” at one point. (Beatrice is very likely here to be using the lay definition of ‘bilingual’ as meaning near-native in two languages). She later made an attempt to regain some ground through formal study of French:

I’ve regressed a bit - um I - I ended up - I did some units by correspondence through UNE in French after I came back and - I wouldn’t put myself at the bilingual category - certainly not now - at my heyday, possibly when we were living - probably the peak was in Cambodia ... I felt I was as close to being bilingual as I would ever have been, but since that I have - I don’t really do any reading in it today - so a lot of my vocab has gone. (Beatrice)

Susan claims to be ‘rusty’ in the three languages she was once fluent in, but she is confident that she could regain her skills, saying jocularly:

…yeah, rusty in all of them - I think they’re all there somewhere, yes, I think if [I went on] an overseas trip I’d very quickly pick it up! (laugh)

Orla, too, says that her Indonesian has lapsed, but because she is planning a holiday there, she has started working with tapes to regain her former level. All these bilinguals, then, are expressing through personal stories their belief that they can learn languages, and that sometimes that learning will be arrested by circumstances or because they find a particular language difficult, or because they had insufficient contact with it. They also have real-life accounts of how language proficiency declines with lack of use, but while this may be cause for some regret, the loss is not seen as irrevocable. They see attrition as natural, but also see that it can be overcome with effort, and many of them referred to their past and ongoing attempts to keep up their languages.

6.1.1.4  Bilinguals’ beliefs about bilinguality

The circumstantial bilinguals seemed more likely to see themselves as ‘bilingual’ than did the elective bilinguals, probably since in lay parlance the term is more commonly attached to those who have grown up with two languages. Four of these teachers expressed beliefs about bilinguality as a normal and core part of themselves. Some of their comments concern two or more languages as a skill which is normal to have, as Greta, a multilingual, says:
I’ve never seen language as like, I’ve never seen learning languages as particularly - as a particular skill to have - I’ve never seen it as anything different to know three or four languages, I always think that it’s normal. (Greta)

Other comments focus on languages as a key part of their identity:

…so it’s always been two languages, always, so it’s very hard for me to imagine what it would be like not to have two. (Greta)

I grew up very much biculturally …languages are very much related to thought processes and therefore it’s very important to retain them in order to have those different modes that are part of who you are. (Shanaz)

In Shanaz’s case she uses her experience of bilinguality to convince the students that they do not have to give up their first language and culture, but that it is possible to have both:

I’m very keen to communicate to students that they don’t need to give up anything - they can enhance - they can take on, they learn, they can enjoy…so there’s this sense that you can leave a place but you never really need to leave. (Shanaz)

Felicity, who became bilingual in adult life (an elective bilingual), seems to be a late convert to the benefits of bilingualism for ESL teachers:

…can you imagine if you’ve never actually been - had - the experience of learning another language, what expertise would you have [as a language teacher]? (Felicity)

Ofra, a circumstantial bilingual in English and Polish who grew up in a migrant family describes her father’s multilingualism:

Dad worked in the steelworks …of course he could speak every language but English …I mean he can speak English and his vocab is excellent but he - he speaks Italian and every other language better because he spent all of his life with migrants. (Ofra)

Bilinguality as expressed by these teachers is normal, unremarkable, and achievable. It is described here as a skill, as part of one’s identity, and as being an inevitable result of contact with other language speakers in the workplace.
6.1.1.5 **Bilinguals’ belief that language learning is difficult, but possible**

Although the bilinguals tend to talk about language learning as a normal part of life, this is not to suggest that they view it, or talked about it, as easy or effortless. On the contrary, those who had learned a second language formally (as opposed to acquiring it in early childhood) were well aware of the application, concentration, perseverance, and at times, frustration involved in learning L2. As will become clearer when we contrast the monolinguals’ views, though, the bilinguals see L2 learning as entirely possible. With sufficient effort and time, we can all learn languages, their words suggest.

Comments from eight bilinguals were included in this section. Although four of them are circumstantial bilinguals, they are all talking about elective bilingual *experience*.

Lidia (a non-native speaker immigrant to Australia) remembers clearly her frustration with listening to the radio and understanding nothing. She persevered, though, and after a while she could understand words, then phrases, and eventually the whole broadcast. She recalls that:

…the frustration is one of the things you never forget and you remember that you had similar problems and **what you did to overcome** [them]. [Emphasis added.] (Lidia)

Well I was a hopeless French student at high school ……. (she then lived in France, and completed a degree when she returned to Australia) but it was just sheer will that I got myself through it [the degree] and then a whole year afterwards I didn’t want to pick up a paper a French newspaper because I just … (laugh) it had been **so** painful, **so** painful. (Helena)

Simone describes a long struggle to learn French, in which she now has near-native proficiency:

It actually took me a long time to learn French even though it was very … I really enjoyed it. I found it very hard as well, by the time I got to uni, my grammar was still hopeless, still just a total muddle … but then when I went to France I found that I could understand it and then, just once you’re there it took off. (Simone)

Later, she studied Spanish and found it fairly easy to acquire with her knowledge of French, but found Japanese more of a challenge:

…but then I tried to do a little bit of Japanese, also the Silent Way and … I found [that] more difficult. (Simone)
Fiona compares her efforts to learn Japanese in Japan as being like breaking a code which she eventually, through application, learned to do:

I mean I had good skills, survival skills, like catching the train, reading signs, reading in shops and on packaged foods … but I realise that, you know that idea of language as code-breaking, like at that very bottom level ….. like this was a secret code that everyone else knew and I didn’t know, and I just had to break it. (Fiona)

Colin, fluent in four languages, talked of how he makes the effort to maintain his German because he is well aware of the effort involved, and does not wish to lose it.

… because I’ve been … [it’s] almost 25 years since I started, and I still speak it when I get the chance, because I know how hard it is to learn a language, so I’m not prepared to just forget it again! (Colin)

In this comment Colin shows his belief that language learning takes effort and dedication, as well as his recognition that language attrition occurs with lack of practice. His awareness of both of these factors informs his resolve not to let his hard-earned proficiency slip.

This section has presented and discussed the bilinguals’ ways of talking about their own language proficiency and language learning, as a reflection of their presumed beliefs about language learning. The main findings were that the bilinguals described their levels of proficiency dispassionately, that they seemed to regard progress and attrition in language learning as normal and predictable, that they seemed to have weathered language learning failures without damage to their overall perception of themselves as language learners, and that they believe that language learning takes effort, persistence and time but that ultimately it is entirely possible. The next section will examine how the monolinguals described their language learning.

6.1.2 Monolinguals

6.1.2.1 Monolinguals’ view of their own language proficiency
As outlined in Chapter 4 (Method) and Chapter 5 (Teachers’ language biographies), the teachers classed as monolinguals in this study had all had some contact with language learning, either formal or informal, and all nine of them made reference to this experience during the interviews. It is thus possible, as well as consistent with the aims
of the study, to examine the teachers’ professed beliefs and views about the nature of this experience.

In describing their proficiency in any languages they had studied, the monolinguals in general did not exhibit the same neutrality as did the bilinguals. Their comments instead tended towards self-beratement and suggested that they see language learning as desirable, but something they have failed to achieve. The comments have been grouped into those which expressed a belief about the person’s language learning ability in general, those which express a belief about particular instances of language learning, and those which portray a particular attitude towards their own language learning, in this case one of hilarity and self-deprecation.

Three comments were made by monolingual teachers which conveyed the view that the speaker had poor skills in learning language in general.

[Interviewer: Do you speak any other languages yourself?] No, and what’s more, I’m a very poor language learner. (Hilary)

Hilary’s response ‘No’ was given firmly and extremely rapidly after the question, and followed by an emphatically negative self-evaluation. Both the speed and the firmness of the response suggested not only that her opinion here was an established one, but also that this was not an unanticipated question. It suggests that she had given previous thought to her own lack of language learning success, and was accustomed to presenting herself in a negative light, albeit with dignity. Kim and Michelle also used unfavourable descriptions of themselves as language learners and users, suggesting that, like Hilary, they also see themselves as lacking in language learning ability, and feel some inadequacy because of it.

… as a learner of another language I’d probably be a bad learner. I’d probably slide, do my best to slide out of the lessons! (Kim)

I’m hopeless, I can’t speak any other languages. (Michelle)

Another monolingual teacher made the comment that if she was to take on any further study connected with her work it would be to learn a language to a high level of proficiency. Elaine had learned a little French, a little Spanish, and Latin, and finds
Latin useful in analysing English lexis and grammar. It may be this experience which suggests to her that fluency in a second language would be useful, as she explains:

… I did Latin at school, yeah, and I feel that that helps with grammar and with vocab still, but I feel that if I had … if I was to take on any further study to help with my job I feel that it would be to learn another language myself, really proficiently. (Elaine)

Elaine, does, however, unlike the monolinguals above, express some confidence that she could learn. She is the teacher whose language biography placed her at the ‘least monolingual’ point on the bilingual/monolingual continuum and perhaps this is reflected in her view of her own potential.

As well as general statements of lack of languages and lack of language learning ability, there were specific instances given of perceived lack of skill or ability by eight out of the nine monolinguals. Examples of these are as follows:

[in Japan] it was a holiday, visiting friends and exposing myself to another culture and feeling totally inadequate with the language, because I practised my Japanese over there and no-one could understand what I was saying. (Tina)

I learned Japanese through a Continuing Education course and I must say I wasn’t very competent. I wasn’t a very good student ….I think it was because I found it all too difficult and I thought “ohhhhh, I can’t do this!”, and I really did want to be able to be a little bit competent with it, yeah, but I wasn’t really a good student. I don’t know … I found it too hard. (Tina)

I’d probably ,, I would be able to read [French] and I might understand a little bit but not much, but speaking … no once again I’d be too shy. (Tina)

Connie talked of her learning of a Central Australian language, both through formal study and through living among its speakers. She encountered the phenomenon of being able to ask questions or make comments, but being unable to understand the answer or to continue a conversation.

… and then I went out and started uttering deep and meaningful sentences like ‘the dog is sitting’ and someone would say ‘oh he’s a good dog that, I’ve had him for 10 years, he can catch kangaroos like billyho, everything’ - oh oh oh oh!!!! (miming confusion and panic at the long answer) Well, I got to the stage where I could understand that, but all I could say back was ‘yes’ (laughter). Pretty pathetic really! (Connie)
The terms used by the monolinguals were far more judgemental and negatively evaluative than anything said by the bilinguals, even when the bilinguals were recounting their failures. We see in the above quotes such pejorative words and phrases as “totally inadequate”, “I wasn’t very competent …. not a good student”, “too shy” ,“pretty pathetic really” ,“I’m a very poor learner”. Michelle, who spent time in India describes how she did not manage to learn any of the local language:

… you’re going to ask me did I learn any Hindi. The answer is nooooo (upward intonation])…. (Michelle)

The interviewer, as discussed in Chapter 4 (Method), had conscientiously avoided asking questions about the teachers’ other languages, and had avoided indicating an interest in bilingualism, until it was time to elicit the language biography. While it is possible that this interest in bilingualism was nonetheless picked up by teachers, Michelle’s slight defensiveness (“you’re going to ask me…noooooo”) could be taken, like Hilary’s response above, to be an indication that she has been asked this question, or possibly asked herself this question before. It could suggest that teachers see their own lack of language learning as a personal failing. A common technique for dealing with one’s failings in public discourse is to present oneself in a comic light, and this tendency was noted in the interviews with the monolingual teachers. Descriptions of their lack of ability in second languages were frequently relayed with self-deprecatory humour and laughter:

… but I don’t think I’ve ever said anything that anyone’s ever understood really (laugh) in French. (Connie)

my Vietnamese students that try to teach me words - and I know - that I’m saying something entirely different and - I cannot hear any difference in what I’m saying at all! (laughter). (Hilary)

Nick described his level of Russian as “miniscule”, laughing that he knew “just a few words” so that so that he was able to “ask for the salt – or the tea”. Tina, learning basic Japanese in Japan, joked that:

… I wasn’t too bad at the end [of my stay]. I could say “hello my name is Tina, please look after me!” (laughter)
The phrase “I wasn’t too bad at the end”, which might lead us to expect an anecdote about a successful encounter, is here juxtaposed with a very basic example of her Japanese speaking skill. (Her example here is a translation of a standard formulaic greeting in Japanese). In this way she ironises her experience, giving as evidence of her speaking skills nothing but the ability to utter the most elementary formula. Michelle’s account of her non-learning of Tamil “because it’s spoken at the rate of knots” concluded with her saying:

I think I learned how to say “hello” in Tamil after a year – that says it all! (laughter). (Michelle)

“That says it all” seems to mean in this context that this anecdote sums up her competence, or rather lack of competence as a language learner. Hilary points to the lack of opportunity to develop French speaking and listening skills in her schooldays but claims that, unlike her, others learned to speak, so she believes it must be her lack of ability which is the problem:

I was quite good at French writing but I don’t understand it when anybody speaks to me. In those days you never heard anybody but your French teacher who spoke with a French accent, so I was never exposed, even though I listened to tapes and things I never really learned to distinguish the sound. And so I think I am a poor language learner because I know lots of people in the same situation who did very well, and speak brilliantly. (Hilary)

The perceived failings of high school French instruction were also highlighted in the dramatic tale by one of the monolinguals of dredging up a few words of French when in Paris. She describes how it was a revelation to her that the dull irrelevant material of the classroom was actually a means of communication:

[then I thought] maybe I could speak in French!’ It was like uh! and I went ‘a quelle heure la traine depart de la gare’ [sic] and he answered me and I went [pulls face] he understood what I said!!! It was like, that was a revelation! That actually you could talk in another language! I mean 5 years of French and really I didn’t have much idea … I just think I didn’t associate all those years of learning in school with the real true language that people spoke in a part of the world, it was like there was no connection! (Frances)

In Australian society boastfulness is not well regarded, and most people relate their achievements and skills in modest ways, even underemphasising them on occasions. It is to be expected, then, that teachers might tend to underplay their ability in language learning and language use. However, the comments of the monolinguals contrast
strongly with those of the bilinguals who acknowledge their skills without either boasting or false modesty: seeing it as normal and unremarkable, they talk in fairly neutral terms. The monolinguals’ talk is peppered with self-deprecating references, humour at their own expense, laughter, and seeming exaggerations in an attempt at jocularity. Whether these beliefs about their own inadequacy led to their failure to learn languages, or whether their lack of success led to beliefs about their inadequacy is impossible to tell. More important for this study is the finding that the monolinguals appear to have pessimistic beliefs about their own ability to learn and use languages other than English. Beliefs which emerged about the difficulty and potential humiliation of the learning process follow.

6.1.2.2 Monolinguals’ views that language learning is difficult and humiliating

Six of the monolinguals made reference to language learning as being difficult and/or frustrating. There were several references, too, to the humiliation which can be suffered by the learner, either at the hands of an insensitive teacher, or by attempting to use the language with native speakers.

Nick told how his limited contact with Russian had made him understand the difficulties that his students have of being in a new country trying to learn a new language. The following quotations are typical of his emphasis on how hard language learning is:

[I had] difficulty in learning the Russian language…... [my wife] had great difficulty learning English…… I’ve learned a few words [of Russian] … I’m trying but it’s very very difficult … English is very hard for these students. (Nick)

He is surrounded in his family by communication barriers: his father-in-law only speaks Russian; his wife is losing her Russian because she only uses it with her father; Nick and the children speak only English and cannot communicate with the grandfather. As a caring and dedicated teacher, Nick seems to see mainly the problems created by inability to speak another language and the difficulties presented by learning, and this, he suggests elsewhere, causes him to be particularly gentle and patient with his students.

Tina recalls the struggle she had using her limited Japanese in Japan:
When I had to put things into sentences that was pretty difficult. If I could say phrases, that was OK [but saying] sentences [was] difficult. For one thing the pronunciation was pretty pathetic and the structure was probably all wrong, but, yeah, I found it very difficult. (Tina)

Connie gave a graphic illustration of how she sees language learning as fraught with danger of making a fool of oneself, when she talked about her learning of Anmatyerr, a Central Australian language:

I know how difficult it is for pronunciation. I mean the word for ‘dog’ has got this bizarre sound that you make at the back of your throat that isn’t made in English - and most - the sound that I think is dog would come out as ‘big hairy monster’! Which, you know, would send all the kids into gales of laughter, and I mean, the usual mistakes people make when they’re learning to speak a language: they’re trying to be incredibly polite, and they’re actually using the word for ‘penis’ or something (laughter). It’s so humiliating! (laughter). [I try to teach] so that people aren’t humiliated and embarrassed by their mistakes, because good language learners take gambles, and the odds are that some of them are going to pay off but a lot of them aren’t and you don’t want people to feel really embarrassed and humiliated by it. (Connie)

Frances recalled how ‘stupid’ she felt at her lack of progress in a Spanish evening class, saying:

Look at you! (meaning herself, Frances) … and I’m not a stupid person … just that it’s really difficult to learn a second language as an adult I think, and I do believe that the older you are the more difficult it is. Yes, just that it’s really difficult, and that it takes a lot of concentration and a lot of mental energy to learn, and that it’s not easy to remember what you’ve done last week, like [mimicking a critical teacher] “Don’t you remember it this week? well why not?” (Frances)

Hilary remembers how terrified she was of making a mistake in French for fear of being laughed at:

(When I was studying French) … you couldn’t say a sentence in French unless it was correct - and we were always told how critical the French were, how they never made allowances for you and so I was terrified of ever opening my mouth. (Hilary)

and elsewhere she talked about the difficulties of adult ESL learners learning English script:

[they really need to] practise forming letters, but adults don’t have time to do that, and [they] feel humiliated by doing it too I think. (Hilary)
The monolinguals were not the only ones to be aware of the potential for loss of self-esteem in language learning. Elide, a high-level circumstantial bilingual, related her experience of learning Chinese as causing her to feel “like a fool” and “panic”. Beatrice, after developing high-level competence in two languages, found herself as a tourist in Italy struggling with a new language:

You suddenly remind yourself how much of a struggle it is: how humiliating it is as an adult. (Beatrice)

Rebecca, a non-native speaker circumstantial bilingual, claimed that when learning a language “you feel that you’re quite stupid but in fact you’re not”.

Although both monolingual and bilingual teachers recognise the difficulty and threat to the ego of language learning, the bilinguals do have successful experience with which to mitigate their sense of failure or inadequacy.

One of the shared characteristics of the monolingual teachers is that, in discussing their beliefs about language learning they do, like the bilinguals, make reference to their own language learning experience. Since this is limited in scope and unsuccessful, what seems to resonate most with them is the difficulty of learning a second language, and the potential for humiliation it entails. They can therefore empathise with their students in the hardship they face, but they have no experience of success to share or to draw on. They do not mention any positive aspects of language learning – that it can be fun, that differences in languages can be a source of endless fascination, that it can be exhilarating to experience a sudden breakthrough in ability to communicate, that seeing the world through the prism of another language can enrich one’s life.

Chapter 6.1 has presented teachers’ expressed beliefs about their own second language learning, and the differing perspectives of bilingual and monolingual teachers have been discussed. Chapter 6.2 will consider another major theme which emerged from the data: teachers’ beliefs about students’ learning of English as a second language.
6.2 Teachers’ beliefs about students’ learning of English as a second language

Two of the interview questions directly elicited views on the difficulties of English for ESL students. They were:

How does English differ from other languages in your view?

What special problems does English present to students?

The first question was an attempt to find out something about the teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about linguistic aspects of English as compared to other languages. The second question was designed to elicit teachers’ views about how difficult English is for students. Both questions were also intended as a way of finding out if teachers used their own knowledge of languages, and their own experience of language learning, as a resource for thinking about how their students encounter the learning of English as a second language. As with all the data, that discussed here is not confined to the answers to the above questions, but is also drawn from other parts of the interview where relevant.

Beliefs which stood out as being of interest or relevance were:

Beliefs about the difficulty or ease of learning English compared to other languages;

Beliefs about which aspects of English are easy or difficult for students;

Beliefs that learning English or language learning in general is a difficult task for students.

6.2.1 The difficulty or ease of learning English compared to other languages

Eleven of the bilingual teachers made comparisons between English and other languages they knew, giving spontaneous examples. Some mentioned specific aspects of languages such as grammar or syntax, and others gave only a general comparison:

[Is English hard to learn?] I don’t think it’s that hard really, I mean if I think of trying to learn something like Russian or even German. (Simone)

You know, I’d rather be learning English than Polish, I think … but really when I think of the Polish language - nothing could be tougher than learning Polish - the grammar is extremely convoluted. (Ofra)
I think it’s one of the most frustrating things - learning French or German - the gender thing … [compared with English]. (Bridget)

Indonesian’s just so much simpler. The structure’s so much simpler (mmhm) I think English is certainly difficult. (Mary)

Here three teachers think English is easier than the languages they compare it with, the first on the basis of her knowledge of Russian and German, the second on the basis of the grammar as compared with Polish, and the third because it lacks grammatical gender. The fourth teacher thinks it is harder on the basis of “structure” – presumably syntax. Comparisons were made between English and Russian or German (easier than either), English and Polish (English grammar is less “convoluted”), English and German (German grammar is harder), Indonesian (its word order is more straightforward than English), English and “European languages” (English is easier because there is less agreement and fewer declensions), English and Spanish and German (the latter two have greater congruence between spelling and pronunciation), English and Mandarin (English is harder because it has more complex tenses and morphemes, and a larger vocabulary).

The point here is not whether English is easier or more difficult for students to learn than other languages – linguists tend to be of the opinion that all languages have some aspects which are complex and therefore difficult, and other aspects which are straightforward (Crystal 1987). There is also considerable doubt whether, as earlier thought, different equals difficult for a learner (Ellis 1994), although it is generally accepted that a language which shares the same origins is easier to learn than one with a very different ancestry. Beyond these general and inconclusive positions from the discipline of linguistics, it is likely that ease or difficulty is very much a personal issue, related to one’s prior experience of language. The point here, then, is that the teachers quoted above are in a position to make a comparison between English and the other languages they know. In contrast, five of the monolinguals with little or no language learning experience made comments such as the following, indicating their lack of ability to make comparisons, or or their tendency to make vague or ill-informed ones.

I’m afraid I don’t know enough about other languages. I learned French at school … I have heard them [students] say that the tense system is a lot more complicated than in their language, for instance, and I’ve
heard them complain about the fact that the rules are just so bendable, and that it seems to be very quirky in certain aspects … But I don’t feel terribly qualified to answer that. (Michelle)

… even though there are plenty of rules, it’s not really so strict as something like … it seems people from a Japanese or Korean or some backgrounds feel like their language is so – set (Sharon)

… we have so many words that differ slightly in meaning, (mm) that’s where the difficulty is, also ‘there’ ‘there is the air’ or ‘theirs are the air’ meaning ownership, and ‘there’ [as in] ‘there it is’, ‘here it is’, as in position (mmhm) er ‘you may go’, ‘maypole’, ‘can I’, ‘can of worms’, (laugh) …. so many words that look the same, sound the same, [and have] different meanings are also very confusing. I don’t think it happens in other languages. (Kim)

The first teacher above admits to her lack of knowledge about other languages with which she could compare English, offering only hearsay from students. The second teacher also bases her view on student reports, and is somewhat vague, suggesting that Japanese and Korean are more ‘set’. The third teacher has an inaccurate view that English is the only language with homophones and homographs. These three comments, all from monolinguals, suggest that these teachers are basing their opinions either on the little language learning experience they have had, or on hearsay from students or other teachers. This kind of knowledge, then, is possibly more fragmentary and unreliable than that gleaned from the experience bilinguals have had.

6.2.2 Beliefs about which aspects of English are difficult or easy for students

Most teachers had an opinion of how English compared to other languages in terms of the difficulty it presented to students. The bilinguals tended to give informative answers which referred to specific but major areas such as English pronunciation, whereas most of the monolinguals gave either vague, very general answers or very piecemeal answers referring to a single instance.

6.2.2.1 Difficult aspects of English for students

Nine bilinguals and all nine monolinguals talked of which aspects of English they thought posed difficulty for students. The answers of the bilinguals tended to be informative and included:
… spelling I think, especially for … spelling and [English] not being phonetic is a problem for a lot of students …. Tenses might be a little bit of a problem initially, but I think mostly, I think the spelling is a huge problem for a lot of people. (Simone)

We have a number of tenses, whereas in many languages they just use words which suggest a time like [time markers] yesterday, yes that kind of thing (Int: I go tomorrow?) like the Chinese, this is their perennial problem, so that’s one thing. And also in the tenses there’s a lot of differences, fine differences between continuous and simple [aspects of tenses], that kind of thing. I always find it very hard to explain. (Anna)

Other answers stressed articles, perfect tenses, the large number of vowel and diphthong sounds in English, syntax and the spelling/pronunciation disjuncture mentioned by Simone (above). About half of the answers were illustrated with contrasts from languages known by the bilinguals, such as Mary’s comparison of reading aloud in English and Indonesian:

[the way]… the syllables are put together in Indonesian, there’s no way you can’t read something. (Mary)

Here she is referring to the direct parallels in Bahasa Indonesia between orthography and pronunciation, so that once a learner knows the vowel sounds and how syllables are pronounced, he or she can read aloud virtually any word with correct pronunciation.

The monolinguals’ answers tended to be vague, less informed than those of the bilinguals and in some cases of questionable accuracy. Vague answers sometimes echoed common myths that English is a language with little discernible structure, which does not fit patterns in the same way that other languages do. This view, which is common among laypeople, possibly arose as a result of teachers in past times using Latinate grammar as a means of teaching English grammar. Since English does not conform to descriptions of Latin grammar very well, it is presumed to be irregular, rule-less and disorganised.

I think English is difficult because [of] the irregularities, the lack of rules. (Elaine)

… in a lot of ways I think the more English you learn, the more difficult it gets, because there’s so many more factors involved in everything that you do and you learn more and more exceptions to all rules. (Frances)
Other responses reflected the belief that English is more complex than other languages, in richness of vocabulary and in variety of structure:

I think one of the things that seems to come up a lot is that there are, in English, so many different ways of saying things that mean pretty much the same thing. (Sharon)

… and it seems the business of mood, and then there’s tense and then there’s mood [sic] and then there’s aspect, [which are all difficult and complex] and it seems to me that other languages don’t have quite so many factors like that. (Frances)

… in spelling rules and our sentence structures, pronouns, all those sorts of things that aren’t in other languages. (Tina)

Well, it does seem to be incredibly complicated in terms of structure [and] in terms of vocabul- … Well I think what seems to make it incredibly complicated is the fact that so many words can be used in so many different ways in so many different parts of speech and so many different meanings that it makes it very confusing (Frances)

We [English speakers] have so many words! We have so many descriptive words, we have so many colours, we have tall, large, vast, gigantic… (Kim)

Other comments seemed to be of dubious accuracy, such as Nick’s confusion of definite and indefinite articles (although this could be a slip of the tongue). This was his only response on this topic.

Yeah, well I think it’s the indefinite articles ‘a’ and ‘the’ [sic] (Nick)

Connie says that the simple past tense is one of the major problems for Asian students, and suggests that word meaning in English is always conveyed in the last syllable. Certainly many final morphemes such as ‘ed’ for simple past and ‘s’ for plural or possession do convey meaning, but she rather overstates the case.

…mistakes in the past tense. It’s just such a cow of a tense for Asian students. (Int: Simple past, you’re talking about?) Yeah, yeah. So, um, I think that’s the major difficulty for people learning English … they all understand that the meaning of the word is carried in the last syllable, but getting them to pronounce it … getting some people to pronounce it is very difficult. (Connie)
Not knowing other languages, or knowing only a very little of another language does not give the monolingual teachers a very sound basis for forming beliefs as to which aspects are likely to be difficult for students. It is common for monolingual speakers to have an inflated idea of the complexity and richness of their own language and this tendency seems to be exhibited among these teachers. The less informative, vague answers were a feature of the monolinguals’ answers whereas bilinguals tended to give more informative answers which they could justify with reference to specific features of other languages.

6.2.2.2 **Easy aspects of English for students**

Six bilinguals and two monolinguals expressed views that certain aspects of English are not particularly difficult for students.

Janice, (an elective bilingual), was of the opinion that English is easy to speak to a basic level of competence but gets harder with more advanced study:

> I’ve always thought that English is an easy language to learn to a functional level. [It’s] easy to learn, but to be really good at it, it’s very difficult, to get a handle on the grammar. And even to be able to communicate ungrammatically is quite within the reach of every student I think. (Janice)

She also compares Indonesian word order, concluding that English word order is more regular:

> My knowledge of language isn’t so great, but I did very briefly look at Indonesian, and I know things like word order [in English] are much more regular. (Janice)

Two teachers, both speakers of European languages, claimed that English grammar was not particularly hard. Two teachers mentioned word order as being straightforward, and one argued that English is relatively easy because it does not have agreements:

> [You don’t have] … the problem of agreement: things don’t decline, you don’t have so many different parts to the verb, and so on. (Anna)

Only two monolinguals expressed a view that aspects of English are easy. One was Kim, who bases her opinion on the fact that her aunt learned it, and if her aunt could,
anyone can, as well as on her belief that the rules of English are ‘basic’: a belief she
does not attempt to justify.

… if my 70 year old auntie at the time, she learned English - if she can learn English anyone can -
English may be a confusing language, but the rules, most of the rules of English are very basic. (Kim)

The other monolingual teacher, Hilary, has a more informed position. She is the teacher
who described herself as a “very poor language learner” who could barely use or
remember a word of the French and Spanish she had studied. However, she had been a
Latin teacher and, earlier in the interview, had recalled her prowess in Latin with quiet
pride. Her knowledge of Latinate grammar clearly informs her view about the relative
difficulty of English:

I mean they [students] say that English is very hard, but that’s only because they’re learning it, and they
haven’t learned anything else much. I don’t think … I mean we [English speakers] don’t [have] all the
verb changes and irregularities and noun endings, and subject agreement and things - or very few - and so
I don’t think it’s a really difficult language, except for that aspect of it. And if you have any kind of
European background the vocabulary is not all that difficult. (Hilary)

Again, the bilinguals have a basis for comparing which is greater than that of the
monolinguals since they are in a position to make comparisons on the basis of personal
experience. The monolinguals have to make their judgements on the basis of limited
experience, hearsay or inference. Where, however, a monolingual does have some
language learning background, as in Hilary’s case, it tends to become apparent. Hilary
was not classed as a bilingual in this study because she cannot ‘speak’ another
language, and a decision was made not to include competence in classical languages in
the definition of bilingualism adopted for the study since it is not possible to be
‘functionally competent’ in them. However her knowledge of Latin, and of how Latin
contributed to the formation of Romance languages, evidently contributes to her view of
English, and enables her to make informed and reasonable comparisons of grammar and
lexis.
6.2.3 Beliefs that learning English or language learning in general is a difficult task for students

Beliefs that language learning in general, and English in particular, is difficult for students were expressed by four monolinguals and one bilingual.

… [the students] all have something in common; they’re trying to struggle with this ghastly language and cope with a new environment. (Connie)

… just in terms of identity and confidence and things like that, it could really be … be quite hard. (Sharon)

… because I find that actually grammar rules can be so confusing, to a large extent. Plus the fact that my partner is Russian, and I found the ... the difficulty in learning Russian language … made me understand the complexities for people coming to a new country. (Nick)

The comment by the bilingual teacher, Elide, came directly after her description of her own chastening attempt at learning Mandarin:

… so it must be [equally difficult] for our Mandarin speakers who have to learn English. It must be really really difficult … those little poor little blossoms … you’ve got to admire them. (Elide)

In all four cases these opinions arose from lack of or unsuccessful experience. The three monolinguals had no successful language learning experience, and Elide’s was her only experience of elective bilingualism. As a circumstantial bilingual, she grew up with Italian and English and continues to use both. As an early bilingual, she does not have access to memories of successful formal language learning, and so her encounter with Mandarin is both her first experience of formal instruction, and her first experience with a language which differs profoundly from English and Italian. It may well be this which leads her to make the direct parallel with the experience of her “poor little blossoms” (students).

6.3 Summary of teachers’ beliefs about language learning

As stated earlier, once the theme of ‘beliefs about the nature of language learning, and its ease or difficulty’ had been identified, the interviews were read repeatedly looking for any indications of teachers’ views on these. Results have been divided into beliefs
relating to the teachers’ own experience of learning L2, and beliefs relating to students’
experience of learning English.

There were reasonably clear differences between the bilinguals and the monolinguals.
The major one was that bilinguals appeared to see L2 learning and use as something
unexceptional and achievable. They talked in a neutral way about their own level of
proficiency, their attempts at learning languages, their failures, progress and lapses.
Several of them, particularly the circumstantial bilinguals, seemed to see bilingualism
as normal and unremarkable. They all acknowledged the difficulty and effort involved
in learning, and maintaining, L2, but a strong sense was conveyed that success is
possible.

The monolinguals talked about their own attempts at language learning in much more
negative ways. They used terms to convey failure, incompetence, shyness and
embarrassment, and laughed frequently at their own expense. They seemed to see as
somewhat shameful both the lack of progress they had made in languages they had
studied, and their general lack of language learning ability.

Another major theme extracted was how the teachers talked about the difficulty for
students of learning English. There was a tendency among the bilinguals to make
comparisons between English and the other languages they were familiar with.
Monolinguals do not, and cannot, make these comparisons, except in general terms
usually based on hearsay. Teachers also elaborated on specific differences between
English and other languages. Bilinguals tended to give more detailed and specific
answers, often backed up by making comparisons with other languages, whereas the
monolinguals’ answers were vaguer and less specific. This difference raises the
question of from where the teachers gain this knowledge. There are texts in existence
(Swan and Smith 1987) aimed at ESL/EFL teachers which compare the structure,
vocabulary and lexis of English with several other languages, and so this knowledge can
be gained from reading. Bilinguals have the added resource of their own study of other
languages, and can thus speak from personal experience as well as any study or reading
in comparative linguistics they may have done. Monolinguals, however, can only base
their opinions on their reading or on hearsay from other teachers or students, as some of
them acknowledged. Of those who emphasised the difficulty of learning English, one
was bilingual and four were monolingual.
Bilingual teachers appear to see second language learning as something normal and achievable. They talk about the patterns of language learning from personal experience: different rates of progress, frustration, leaps forward, success, failure to progress, attrition and re-acquisition.

Monolingual teachers seem to see L2 learning as characterised by difficulty and failure and as frequently associated with personal shame and humiliation. In considering how their students cope with English learning, bilinguals seem to have a more detailed and informed understanding of how English compares with other languages than monolinguals.

Returning to the constructs about teacher cognition which were reviewed in Chapter 3.5, we can see that ‘experiential knowledge’ (Wallace 1991) derived from language learning experience seems to inform both teachers’ knowledge and teachers’ beliefs. This experiential knowledge appears to be both clearly available to teachers as they express their beliefs about their own and their students’ language learning, and to be influential in determining how they see the task of language learning. The bilinguals’ experience of successful language learning appears to result in their seeing language learning as normal and achievable. The monolinguals’ lack of successful experience appears to result in beliefs that language learning is extremely difficult and success unlikely. Experience, too, seems to affect knowledge about linguistic aspects of English in that the bilinguals drew spontaneously on their knowledge of other languages to make informed comparisons. Monolinguals appeared to have much less developed notions of how English compared with other languages. The data examined here does, then, provide some support for the notion proposed in Chapter 3.5 that language learning experience is an important shaper of insights which interact with knowledge and beliefs gained from both formal and informal sources.
Chapter 7

How teachers’ language learning experience contributes to their knowledge and beliefs in ESL teaching

I can appreciate that there is another way of expressing things … using a different language … it’s something you don’t really realise until you’ve actually tried to grapple with a foreign language and expressing yourself in it. (Bilingual respondent Anna)

Chapter 7 presents data from the interviews in which teachers made direct links between their own second language(s) and their work as ESL teachers. Sometimes this occurred in response to a direct question and sometimes it occurred spontaneously. For example, once a teacher’s language biography had been elicited and discussed, towards the end of each interview, a direct question was asked such as “Does your experience as a learner of (Japanese or French) inform your teaching of ESL in any way?” Twenty of the twenty-two bilinguals answered in the affirmative, as did five of the nine monolinguals. In the remaining six cases the question was not asked, or was deflected by the respondent, but in no case was an answer in the negative given. A great deal more data, however, was obtained from spontaneous references to L2 experience by the teachers. For example, when asked about their approach to teaching grammar, a teacher would make reference to his or her own experience of learning the grammar of another language, often to explain or justify his or her teaching approach. As explained in Chapter 4 (Method), the researcher made efforts to confine questions about teachers’ language learning to the end of the interview, specifically to ensure that if teachers made links earlier than this between their bilinguality and their work, it was as far as possible not prompted by the researcher.

The data has been divided into three main sections:

7.1 General beliefs about the value of language learning for teachers
7.2 What teachers know about language and language use from their own experience
7.3 What teachers know about language learning and language teaching from their own experience.
7.1 General beliefs about the value of language learning for teachers

7.1.1 Language learning as a major formative influence on ESL teaching

About halfway through the interview teachers were asked the general question ‘What are the major things from your personal or professional background which influence your ESL teaching?’. The question was posed in this way because firstly it allowed all teachers to talk about their influences regardless of whether or not they had a second language, and secondly, it gave the opportunity for bilinguals to nominate their language(s) if they wished, without being prompted to do so by the researcher. Spontaneous mention of L2s as key influences in answer to this question, then, constitutes valuable data for the researcher in trying to establish whether language learning background is important for ESL teachers’ professional knowledge and beliefs.

Twenty-five out of the total of thirty-one teachers gave an answer to this question. Four were not asked because the question had not at that point been included in the protocol and two were unable to give an answer. Answers have been grouped according to the main focus of the answer into the following categories with the number included in each in brackets. Three teachers gave two answers, (two in (a) and (b) and one in (a) and (c)) so the total answers number twenty-eight for twenty-five teachers.

a) Learning and/or teaching languages (8)
b) Growing up in a migrant family (4)
c) Experience of travel and contact with other cultures (6)
d) Teaching experience and professional development (5)
e) Other: language-related (3)
f) Other: non-language-related (2)

Examples from each of the categories follow.

(a) Learning and/or teaching languages (8)
An example is from elective bilingual Colin, who described as his major influence the periods he spent in Italy and Germany improving his skill in those languages:
I suppose … yeah, really I can’t get past the fact that, er, er, because I, I feel like I know what … [the students] are going through because I’ve spent so much time in Italy, Germany …. where everyone’s speaking … you know, people don’t speak … there’s no English spoken, so I’ve had to sort of just cope with it, which is wonderful. (Russell)

(b) Growing up in a migrant family (4)
Circumstantial bilingual Ofra attributes her experience as daughter of migrants as being a major formative influence on her ESL teaching:

Well, I guess the fact that my mum and dad were (long pause) wogs\textsuperscript{15} when we were young, and had heavy accents, and were laughed at by the Australians. I guess it makes me very sympathetic and patient… (Ofra)

(c) experience of travel and contact with other cultures (6)
An example of (c) is (elective bilingual) Beatrice’s claim that her life as spouse of a diplomat had been

… a wonderful opportunity, because it’s given me cross-cultural insights, living in all those countries, both me as a foreigner in that country and struggling to use their language and just survive, and it’s been … and also to help me with my understanding of those migrant students we get here… (Beatrice)

(d) Teaching experience and professional development (5)
An example of (d) is (monolingual) Nick’s assertion that it is his experience as a primary school teacher, and particularly the pastoral aspects of it which is his main influence:

I think it’s the understanding with the, er, younger children, but, er, I think the caring aspect of it, you know. I like that as a primary school teacher. Moving into TESOL teaching was a very short step, yeah, because there is a certain amount of assistance … caring for people, that you can, er, have an empathy for them in that situation, and understand the difficulties that they have in this situation. (Nick)

\textsuperscript{15} ‘Wog’ is a derogatory expression for an immigrant of non-English-speaking background. Unlike in Britain, where it usually refers to black people, in Australia it usually refers to immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In recent years it has been reclaimed by second-generation immigrant comedians to refer to themselves in self-parody, (as in the popular stage show “Wogs out of Work”) and it seems here that Ofra pauses to weigh up whether she is prepared to use the term in this ironic, modern sense when for her it still has the old, prejudicial resonance.
Michelle, a monolingual, talked of her earlier career as a speech and drama coach as evidence of her underlying fascination with spoken language:

I’m fascinated by speech I suppose, or very interested in speech, and when … my children were at that point where they were starting to go to school, I was casting around for a career…..’cos I really liked drama and poetry and all those sort of things, and so I did a extra-curricular thing that was in those days known as ‘elocution’ (said archly). …I did my teaching qualifications in that … and so with that you are looking a lot at the sound of the language, both for remedial work .. not nearly as … not nearly at anything like the level that speech pathologists go into it, but you do look at things like lisps, and minor things like substitutions and so forth. (Michelle)

An example of (f) is (monolingual) Frances’ view that her performance experience as a dancer is relevant:

Well, oh I don’t know. Maybe the fact that … well, actually, probably the best thing is that I used to be a dancer, so I’m a very good performer, and I just honestly believe that when you come in to teach you are performing… (Frances)
Table 2: Self-reported major formative influences on ESL teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) Learning and/or teaching languages</th>
<th>(b) Growing up in a migrant family</th>
<th>(c) Travel and contact with other cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca (CB)</td>
<td>Ofra (CB)</td>
<td>Janice (EB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidia (CB)</td>
<td>Elide (CB)</td>
<td>Pamela (EB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simone (CB)</td>
<td>Helena (CB)</td>
<td>Mary (EB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofra (CB)</td>
<td>Simone (CB)</td>
<td>Anna (EB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona (EB)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharon (ML)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin (EB)</td>
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<td>Beatrice (EB)</td>
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<td>Bridget (EB)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) Teaching experience and professional development</td>
<td>(e) Other: language related</td>
<td>(f) Other: non-language related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan (EB)</td>
<td>Elaine (ML) teaching literature and communications</td>
<td>Frances (ML) performing and mothering experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val (EB)</td>
<td>Michelle (ML) teaching speech and drama</td>
<td>Connie (ML) dedication to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick (ML)</td>
<td>Kim (ML) love of drama and storytelling</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tina (ML)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hilary (ML)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Key: CB = circumstantial bilingual, EB = elective bilingual, ML = monolingual.

If we look at which answers were given by bilingual or monolingual teachers, we see that all those in category (a) are circumstantial bilinguals or elective bilinguals, and all those in category (b) are circumstantial bilinguals who had LOTE as part of their upbringing in a migrant family. Those in category (c) include four elective bilinguals and one monolingual, while those in category (d) are two elective bilinguals and three monolinguals. All those in categories (e) and (f) are monolinguals.

Five of the six teachers in category (c) were bilinguals, and all of them had spent extended periods of time in non-English-speaking countries. Four of the bilinguals had learned the language of that country, and the fifth had formally studied the language many years later, tracing her interest back to that sojourn. This suggests that contact with and reflection on language were key parts of their overseas sojourns. Of the twenty-five teachers, fifteen, or over half, nominated either language or cultural experience to be the key contributors to their ESL teaching. A further three teachers, all monolinguals, nominated experience which has been classified as language-related (e). Seven teachers named influences which were not related to language and/or culture.
such as long teaching experience, professional development (d) and their own personal qualities (f). Of these seven, five were monolinguals.

It seems, then, that of the group who answered the question, that fourteen of the sixteen bilingual teachers nominated language or cultural experience as their key influences. The nine monolingual teachers in general lack this experience and therefore could not nominate it. Three of them did, however, name language-related experience. Of the seven teachers who did not nominate language or cultural or language-related experience, five were monolingual.

It appears then as though experience of other languages and cultures, where it exists, is seen by a majority of teachers themselves as a key influence on their teaching of ESL, at least as reported by this group in this interview context.

### 7.1.2 Beliefs about the value of language experience for ESL teachers

Once the teacher’s language biography had been explored, teachers were asked what relevance or influence the language learning they had just discussed has for their ESL practice. In the case of bilinguals, this could be languages they had grown up with or had learned to a high or medium proficiency. In the case of teachers at the ‘monolingual’ end of the continuum, most were still able to answer in terms of the little language learning they had done. The views reported here were made either as part of the answer to this question or elsewhere as part of a teacher monologue, some of which ran for several minutes with minimal contribution from the interviewer.

Ten teachers directly expressed a belief that learning other languages is valuable for ESL teachers in general. The most wide-ranging view came from Greta, one of the most multilingual respondents and a circumstantial and elective bilingual, who attested that “I think everyone should know languages” (i.e. not only teachers), and attributed this belief to her own upbringing in a multilingual environment followed by substantial formal language learning. Nine other teachers focussed their comments on the value of language learning for ESL teachers, and of these three comments were about its general value, and six were about the value of ‘walking in the students’ shoes’ in order to appreciate the nature of the task which students face. The general comments included
the following very emphatic one by Felicity, a teacher who began to learn her second
languages as an adult and is here classified as an elective bilingual:

….I didn’t do any language. I didn’t study any foreign language [at school], it was a real gap.
…if we’re language teachers, what expertise have we really got if we don’t know much about other
languages? Can you imagine if you never actually … had the experience of learning another language?
What expertise would you have? I mean how interested are you in language if you’ve only ever studied
your own? It’s a bit fraudulent I think. (Felicity)

She sees her lack of school language learning as regrettable, but, secure in her now
fluent ability in Indonesian, she is quite confident in her statement that other languages
are essential for a language teacher. Her comment states clearly that she sees the
expertise of an ESL teacher as lying not only in knowledge of English but in “knowing
something about other languages”. She also suggests that there is some sort of expertise
which derives from the very experience of learning another language, and, further, that
learning an L2 demonstrates an “interest in language” which she sees as important for
an ESL teacher.

A similar sentiment was echoed by two other teachers, but from the opposite
perspective, since, as monolinguals, neither has the experience Felicity (above)
mentions. Michelle, at the beginning of the interview, as part of a chat where she was
talking about a trilingual colleague, volunteered the following long before any focus on
second language learning was mentioned:

I’m hopeless, I can’t speak any other languages…. (Michelle)

Asked later about what particular challenges she thought English posed to students, she
replied:

I’m afraid I don’t know enough about other languages… I have heard them [students] say that the tense
system is a lot more complicated than in their language, for instance, and I’ve heard them complain about
the fact that the rules are just so bendable, and that it seems to be very quirky in certain aspects … I don’t
feel terribly qualified to answer that. (Michelle)

Here she is suggesting that if she did have other languages, she would be in a better
position to make comparisons to English and judge its difficulties for students. She is
aware that her students compare English and other languages, but that she does not have
the skills to do this. Elaine, another monolingual, also seemed to see her lack of another language as a drawback, particularly perhaps since she works in a Languages department where both ESL and LOTE are taught:

I feel I’m one of the least qualified of the Languages staff because everybody else does have another language. I studied Spanish and French but, you know, schoolgirl French, and one year of university Spanish. They’re not good enough really … but I feel that if I … was to take on any further study, to help with my job, I feel that it would be to learn another language myself, really proficiently. (Elaine)

Elaine’s statement here clearly positions learning another language as job-related. She sees her limited study of Spanish and French as insufficient, and considers “really proficient” ability in another language to be an important skill for an ESL teacher, and one she regrets not having.

Six teachers talked of how language learning in gave them a glimpse of what students are faced with, and their comments consisted of both normative statements such as Elide’s “every teacher should…” as well as personal justifications for their decision to learn a language.

I think every ESOL teacher should go out there and learn a second language to see how stressed you are and how difficult it is. (Elide)

… and I enrolled in a Spanish course … specifically to look at myself as a learner and just the learning experience and so on. (Helena)

I’m learning Spanish myself now, at the moment, and this has been so good for me (Int: Has it?) Yes, I’m in second year at Uni, and … learning another language is just the best way of learning to be a good teacher. (Paula)

… but I deliberately went out to learn Japanese because I wanted to put myself into the situation of my students. (Tina)

… yes, but I’ll tell you what, a few years ago, about five years ago I went to learn Spanish at the ANU because I thought ‘if you’re teaching ESL then you really ought to have the experience of learning a second language’. (Frances)

… so I suppose I spent about a year learning Spanish. I was partly learning it because I wanted to … well, I just sort of wanted to find out … speak a language that the students might speak, and have the experience of learning a language, and sort of tackle some of the problems they were tackling. (Val)
Four of the above six teachers, as mentioned in Chapter 5, deliberately sought out language learning experience in order to give them greater insights into the experience of their students. Here the teachers emphasise the insights into the process of learning which are generated by language learning. They have felt what it is like to be a learner, and they see that placing themselves ‘in the learners’ shoes’ is valuable for them as teachers. It is clear from this that some teachers themselves see learning a language as an important part of their own professional development. This and other data is examined in more detail in Chapter 7.3.

One further aspect of teachers’ directly expressed statements about the value of language learning is included here. This is the ways in which several of the affirmative responses were given. In several cases they were given rapidly and emphatically, as the following examples demonstrate:

Interviewer: Does your language learning experience relate to your ESL teaching?

Helena: Enormously! ….
Orla: (quickly) Oh yes, yes……
Paula: Absolutely!……
Connie: Oh yeah! because I know that….
Hilary: Oh yes, absolutely!……
Pamela (quickly) Very……
Anna: Yes, yes it does, very much

Here we are looking not at the content of the answers, but the manner of answering and the force of the response. Since the data is spoken data transcribed from audio-recordings, the exclamation marks indicated in the examples were inserted to represent paralinguistic features such as loudness, extra word stress and lengthening of vowels in stressed syllables, all features of speaking with conviction. These features, together with the use of intensifiers such as ‘absolutely’, ‘enormously’ and ‘very much’, repeated words ‘yes, yes’, and the speed of the responses all combine to suggest that at least for these teachers, there was no doubt in their minds that language learning is a key contributor to their knowledge and skills as ESL teachers.
Less emphatic answers were given by some teachers and the manner of response suggested that this was a line of thought which was not at the forefront of the teachers’ professional lives – in other words they were not accustomed to reflecting on the role played by their prior language learning experience. They then, however, went on to give the kind of rich answers examined below in Chapters 7.2 and 7.3.

Fiona: Yes, I think it does….
Penny: Yeah, I suppose it helps you because…..
Anna: Well, I think it helps in that….
Sharon: I think – it relates in some way at least I’m sure, yeah …

Two responses in particular gave a strong impression that language background was a completely unexplored part of the teacher’s inner professional resources.

…um (long pause) mm (pause) I dunno. I’ve never really thought about it. (Int: It’s a hard one isn’t it?) Well, maybe only insofar as you can sort of understand the student a bit better, trying to pick up some of the language, whatever. Uummm I dunno. I can’t really think of any way it would, really. (Simone)

…yeah, that different languages have different ways of doing something, yeah the functional … yes, so that probably helps a little bit, but, I don’t actually … I don’t think about it a lot, it’s terrible. Um, yeah, but it must. It must do it [affect my teaching], yeah, it must, but I can’t even think. (Penny)

Both are bilingual: Simone grew up speaking Schwäbian (a Germanic variety), later studied High German and French, and taught German. Penny studied and taught French and German, and although she uses the languages infrequently now, estimates that she could return to fluency very quickly once surrounded by speakers. Neither immediately sees the relevance of their other languages to ESL. Yet in earlier questions both of these teachers had made comments about language and language learning which made reference to their own language learning and use, as reported below in Chapters 7.2 and 7.3. We can therefore draw two conclusions about these two teachers: that their other languages do contribute to their thinking about ESL, but that this contribution is something on which they are not in the habit of reflecting.

In Chapter 7.1 we have considered a range of overtly expressed statements regarding firstly what teachers see as the major influences on their teaching of ESL, and secondly whether language learning has value for ESL teachers. They include highly emphatic
affirmative statements from bilinguals, statements of regret for not having another language from monolinguals, and less certain, cautious support of the notion by some bilinguals who appear not to have thought about it in any depth. The latter position, though, is contradicted by the richness of the parallels they made with their own language learning when talking about their teaching of ESL.

In Chapters 7.2 and 7.3 we will look at how this language experience generates insights which might contribute to teachers’ professional knowledge. Here we are looking not only at overt statements to this effect by teachers, but also at statements which arose in the context of other questions and stories.

7.2 Insights about language and language use derived from teachers’ own experience

Four key types of insights and knowledge about language and language use were noted in the data:

- insights about language in general deriving from exposure to more than one
- insights from comparing particular languages other than English (LOTE) to English or to each other
- insights about the language experiences of bilinguals and biculturals
- insights about the use of LOTE as a pedagogical tool in ESL

7.2.1 Insights about language in general

Eight bilingual teachers commented to the effect that speaking other languages gave them a greater understanding of language in general, particularly the ways in which languages could differ structurally and reflect differing cultural viewpoints. Typical comments were:

… it helps you understand how languages can be structured differently. (Janice)

…I think you have a greater understanding of language in general, because I think all languages are really are connected in some way… (Greta)
I can appreciate that there is another way of expressing things… using a different language. I know that sounds very simplistic, but it’s something you don’t really realise until you’ve actually tried to grapple with a foreign language and expressing yourself in it. (Anna)

... perhaps in understanding why they don’t get a point [or a] grammatical structure. Just understanding any other language gives you an insight into that. (Ofra)

… the more languages you have, the more advantage you have in accessing different perceptions [and] different experiences … naming different experiences. (Shanaz)

Points which the teachers make here include the knowledge that different linguistic structures can be used to express similar meanings, an insight which, Anna claims, sounds obvious but whose importance cannot really be grasped without experiencing it. Shanaz sees language learning as an additive process of understanding the world and of gaining access to different concepts and names for different experiences. Greta stressed the similarities between individual languages which she thinks, leads to a better understanding of ‘language’ as a general human phenomenon.

Only one monolingual teacher made a comment which could be grouped here. Frances explained how studying a semester of comparative linguistics had opened her eyes to the ways in which languages differ in expressing meaning:

… because I didn’t realise there were so many … oh you know there’s thousands of languages but I didn’t realise that the structure of them was so … there’s just an infinite variety of structures. It’s just amazing how languages denote different things. That is really interesting. (Frances)

Frances, as a monolingual, has arrived at similar conclusions to the bilinguals about the myriad ways in which languages can structure and represent the world. She has arrived there, though, by a different route, namely the study of comparative linguistics, and, while the insight itself appears to be a useful one, it is somewhat different to that of the bilinguals, since it lacks the experiential nature of their language learning. Frances knows that different structures exist, and may be able to give some examples from specific languages, whereas the bilinguals know how to use different structures to express meaning. The first is received knowledge, the second experiential knowledge (Wallace 1991). The insights expressed by the bilinguals relate to some of the competencies outlined by the professional TESOL bodies which were examined in Chapter 2. Their attempts to express their understandings of how language is structured...
and how concepts may be expressed differently in different languages reflect such statements as:

“[Teachers should understand] …. how language is structured for use [and]…. language as a socio-cultural meaning system” (Hogan 1994:9 – 10) and “…. the underlying structure of the subject matter and its relationship to other areas of knowledge.” (Hogan 1994:Appendix A).

The data here suggests that experiential knowledge of the above (which only bilingual teachers have) enhances the kind of received knowledge which all teachers are expected to have as a result of formal training.

7.2.2 Insights from comparing LOTEs to English and to each other

Bilingual teachers frequently referred spontaneously to their LOTEs in responding to questions about how they went about their teaching of ESL, and how they dealt with student difficulties.

Much of the data in this section comes from the early part of the interviews before any questions about teacher language learning were asked. Teachers’ comments have been sorted into the four categories of phonology, language structure, meaning and language use as being the most relevant for language teaching.

There was very little reference to phonology in comparative terms, and the two comments which were found included one about the lack of correspondence between sounds and spelling in English, and one about a language with more vowel sounds than English.

In contrast there were twenty-eight comments from seventeen bilingual teachers and one monolingual teacher which focussed on structural differences between English and other languages in terms of grammar and syntax. The main topics mentioned were tense formation, case and conjugation grammar, determiners and syntax. Tenses featured in five comments, for example the way French has only one present tense to English’s two, to the way Mandarin expresses time reference lexically rather than via morphological changes to verbs and the use of auxiliaries. Case and conjugations also
figured (five comments), with one teacher referring to the seven cases in Czech and another talking of the complexity of Spanish verb conjugations and the use of the subjunctive. Four teachers mentioned determiners, such as articles or the lack of them as a difference, as well as differences in pronoun use, specifically how they can be omitted except for emphasis in Japanese and Spanish. Syntactical differences featured in the comparisons made by five teachers, referring to different practices in Finnish, Indonesian, Vietnamese, Mandarin and Arabic. Language distance as a determiner of structural difference was mentioned by three bilingual teachers, all comparing the closeness of many European languages to English with the greater distance of Asian languages, and seeing this as an indicator of difficulty. Four teachers made ‘other’ general comparisons between languages such as “German grammar is harder than English” (Susan) or “Polish grammar is very convoluted [compared to English]” and one teacher (Colin) referred to the relative importance of particular grammatical features, maintaining that verbal (in)transitivity was much more important in Japanese than in English.

Three bilinguals made comments which have been categorised under ‘language meaning’, and all concerned the general lack of equivalence between lexical items in languages they knew and English. One mentioned the problem of false cognates, specifically the meaning of ‘will’ in German and English, while another focussed on the idiomaticity of phrasal verbs in English and the difficulty they present to Chinese speakers. One teacher (Fiona) reported with glee how she had found very occasionally that an idiom could be translated word for word with the same meaning in her second language. Such a claim could only be made by a bilingual from experience, since such instances are so rare that they are never referred to in any ESL training manual, aimed as they are at instilling an awareness that literal translation is a virtual impossibility.

‘Language use’ was the final category into which comments were placed, and here there were six comments by five bilingual teachers which all concerned pragmatics in English and other languages. Teachers told how they had struggled with adopting the appropriate ways to use language they had learned, for example greeting in a Central Asian language which involves both parties firing rapid questions at each other of the ‘how is so-and-so’ variety while neither party answers. Another teacher told of how she consciously had to modify her Austrian approach to a political argument in order to
avoid offending her Australian friends with her vehemence, an example of how pragmatic norms differ between languages and speech communities.

There was one area of insights arising from knowledge of LOTE where the monolinguals’ comments constituted half of the total of eight comments by seven teachers, and this was in stating that learning the grammar of foreign languages helped them with understanding and analysing the grammar of English for teaching purposes. Four bilinguals referred to their understanding of French, German and Latin grammar as being useful in this way. Two monolinguals claimed that their study of Latin in particular helped with analysing English:

… but I did Latin (spoken emphatically) at school, yeah, and I feel that that helps with grammar and with vocab still … [and] prefixes and suffixes which is a favourite way of mine to teach vocabulary. (Elaine)

I’ve just always been interested in language and the development of language and roots of words, (Int: Oh yes) and I taught Latin at school …. it made it exciting to see some word that you knew and be able to work out what it meant because of that. (Hilary)

Well I went to school when we still had a grammatical thing. I think I would have learned more from the Latin ... I think through other languages you learn the structure of yours, or you make comparisons. (Elaine)

Although users of Latin have not been included as ‘bilinguals’ for reasons discussed earlier, it is obvious that they see their study of Latin grammar as having benefits for ESL teaching. One is that it provides a clue to etymology and provides a rationale for giving explanations and general ‘rules’ to students. The other is that it provides a perspective on English, as Elaine says: “through other languages you learn the structure of yours”, illuminating the benefits of making comparisons in order to arrive at deeper understanding.

There are three points to make about the range and nature of the comments made in this section about insights from comparing other languages to English. By far the greater number of comments in this area came from the bilinguals (41 comments from a pool of 22 bilinguals as compared to four comments from a pool of 9 monolinguals). Second is the fact that all the bilingual comments were made on the basis of languages they knew well themselves. The one monolingual teacher prefaced her comment by a tentative expression acknowledging that she had gleaned it from her students, and her statement
lacked the confidence and authority with which the bilinguals talked of their other languages. It is well accepted anecdotally that ESL teachers learn bits about languages from their students, but the data examined here suggests that teachers’ own language learning seems to provide a much stronger basis for making such assertions about other languages.

Third is the point that the vast majority of the comments comparing languages, both by bilinguals and monolinguals concerned language at the level of sentence grammar. It seems unlikely that this is because they conceptualise language only in this way. In the interviews they talked of a functional approach to teaching ESL and many of them had experience with genre-based, text-oriented and task-oriented approaches which came from both their original training and ongoing professional development. It is not possible for this study to provide answers as to why they talked of second languages almost exclusively in grammatical terms, but a tentative suggestion can be made. This is that, because teachers’ languages are not used in ESL teaching, and tend to stagnate and atrophy unless they have a use for them in their personal lives, they are not subject to the same kinds of professional reflection as is their knowledge of English. What ESL teachers learn about language through an MA TESOL or by participating in professional development activities is examined only in relation to English, and their understanding of linguistic aspects of other languages may be limited to the focus of their own formal classroom learning, which is largely grammar-oriented. Informal learning is even less likely to be accessible to sophisticated analysis. The ability of even high-level bilinguals to articulate aspects of their other languages may be much less sophisticated than their ability to do so with English. Their references to pragmatics and language use were all communicated via personal anecdote, and there were no references to, for example, how different genres were realised in speech and writing, or to different literacy practices beyond script level: both issues which figure strongly in current professional discussions and also commonly in the teachers’ talk about teaching English.

7.2.3 Insights about the language experiences of bilinguals and biculturals

A large number of comments occurred throughout the interviews with some teachers which referred to their experience of growing up or becoming bilingual and bicultural, either through their own migration or through having grown up in a migrant family.
With the exception of one comment from a teacher who had spent two years living in another country, all comments were from the eight circumstantial bilinguals, and this is to be expected since they were defined as those who had grown up with a language other than English and who, except for one, had all grown up with two or more languages. It is they, then, who have the experience of living as bilinguals and biculturals and in this section I shall examine how this experience was realised in their talk of bilingual language use. The four sub-topics dealt with are code-switching, linguistic aspects of immigration, subtractive bilingualism and bilingual identity.

### 7.2.3.1 Code-switching

Perhaps the strongest theme of the talk in this category was that relating to code-switching as part of bilingual life. Code-switching used to be defined narrowly as a purely linguistic phenomenon, where a speaker changed from one language to another because of a deficit in his or her control of one of them (Kasper 1997). In recent years it has begun to be recognised as the creative and complex response of a person to the cognitive and social resources of bilingualism, and it is acknowledged as having many facets (Myers-Scotton 2003). I shall outline those which were mentioned in personal terms by the teachers.

First is the code-switching which is a feature of relationships. Four teachers spoke of using different languages or varieties according to personal relationships. Rebecca speaks mainly Cantonese to her husband but English to her children, while Lidia uses Spanish with her husband, children and close friends. However this description implies a simple and unproblematic equation of one-person, one-language which, examined more closely, is far from the case. Rebecca, asked which of her languages is dominant, answers:

… my children both speak English a lot of the time at home, and then if I want to get things done quickly it’s English. Not that they’re naughty, but they do find it harder to grasp if I speak Cantonese to them, so they’ll take a minute to work out what I want them to do. But if I speak English they immediately know what I want. And at home is half half. My husband speaks Cantonese with me, but then we do throw in English words every now then, for convenience, like there are some terms in English and maybe we are talking about work and so on, so we do mix a lot of English even into our Cantonese conversation, but with the children mainly English. So I’d say English is dominant. (Rebecca)
Rebecca’s account suggests that she sees code-switching as something purposeful – English is more successful than Cantonese for getting her children’s compliance, and while she speaks mainly Cantonese with her husband, they find it “convenient” to use English to express work-related lexical items. It is a common phenomenon that where new terms have been coined to express, for example, technological innovations, these will be available in L2 but not necessarily known in L1. (Crystal (1987) gives examples of this lexical separation of domains between languages.) Rebecca shows herself to be aware of affective and domain-based reasons for code-switching. Lidia gives the following perspective on her choice of language:

I still use Spanish with my closest friends, you see, so probably … it depends on where I am [which] is my dominant language. And if you ask me to talk about me, like if you talk of personal things, I don’t like using Spanish either, it is very interesting. I feel like it’s not me if I’m using English, but if it’s Spanish I probably won’t talk about it, because I don’t like it. So it is … that’s what I’m saying, it all depends on the situation. And with my children I use Spanish, but many times I use English as well so we use both languages. (Lidia)

….. my husband is Spanish (Int: Speaking?) Yeah, he is from (X country) as well but he doesn’t really use much English. He uses it at work. He is a (profession deleted), so he is very good at technical English but he is not very fluid [sic] so he doesn’t really like socialising. Like we don’t invite Australian friends home or things like that. (Lidia)

She switches language according to topic, preferring to use English to talk about introspective things, but also according to her interlocutor, choosing Spanish to talk to her closest friends and her husband. With both of these teachers, even where choice of language with a particular family member is relatively stable, other factors intervene such as topic – both Rebecca and Lidia switch to English to talk about work. Social purpose or function has a bearing too: Rebecca finds English especially effective when giving directions to her children, and Lidia finds it easier to talk about personal issues in English because “it’s not me”. English provides a level of distance which enables her to say things she would feel to be too personal or too revealing in Spanish. Choice of language at home seems to influence Lidia’s social life too – although she has Australian friends she does not invite them home because her husband’s social English is not good enough.
Ofra, who grew up in a Polish-speaking family, talks about her linguistic relationship with her mother, which varies according to the ‘seriousness’ of the topic, the availability of a precise item of lexis, or to exchange confidences in public:

We actually tend to speak English, but when it’s serious she slips into Polish but we don’t really notice and I’ll just use a good Polish word – because some Polish words are wonderful – but I don’t actually speak to her in Polish. But I might just tell her something secretly in a shop… (Ofra)

Another teacher who grew up very much biculturally with one parent/one language found that her relationship with her father changed when they began speaking English together instead of Urdu:

My father always spoke Urdu to me, my mother always spoke English to us. Never a word of English did my father speak to me ‘til maybe I was in my twenties, and then again I felt shy because our relationship was entirely in Urdu. He spoke to his wife in English but not to me….. and now … my father and I, we speak a lot of English and a lot of Urdu. Because of the way the relationship has evolved, there has been a definite shift in the relationship. (Shanaz)

When she married, Shanaz spoke English to her husband, but when they had children they decided to speak both Urdu and English in the family in order to raise the children bilingually. So even when languages are set by family roles, that dynamic can shift with time as children grow up. The change in relationship between a grown daughter and her father is perhaps reflected in the fact that he now uses English, which he previously only used to his wife, with the daughter, and the change in family dynamics caused by the arrival of children is reflected in choice of language. It seems clear then from these few examples that language choice within families is a complex issue which shifts as relationships evolve, as time passes and as situations change.

A further aspect of code-switching involves translation, and teachers who grew up with two languages often found themselves interpreting between their parents and neighbours or teachers. The teacher who currently teaches bilingually spends her classroom time switching between Cantonese, Mandarin and English depending on the purpose of her talk and the stage of the lesson. Other examples of code-switching were given by Simone, who speaks her native German dialect when relatives visit, and Elide, who speaks Italian at home with her family but English elsewhere.
One last example, from one of the elective bilingual teachers who spent two years living in Uzbekistan, concerned code-switching as an aspect of sociopolitical relations. Fiona explained how in the early 1990s she encountered delighted reactions from Uzbek speakers when they found that she, as a foreigner, neither spoke nor cared to learn Russian. Russian was then the lingua franca of the region and also a symbol of the power and status of the USSR.

… the Uzbeks - nobody [no foreigner] ever learned Uzbek. [The locals] were all forced to learn Russian, so for me to come in and to say: “sorry, I don’t speak Russian, can you please speak to me in Uzbek?” aaah, they just thought I was wonderful! (Fiona)

This experience was a powerful lesson for Fiona about how choice of language can sometimes reflect profound social and historical realities, giving her an insight into how speakers of a minority language reacted to a colonising language.

The examples examined here of code-switching by six of the circumstantial bilinguals and one elective bilingual demonstrate the richness and complexity underlying choice of language when two or more are available to both interlocutors. Choice of language was seen to be determined by personal relationships, by domain, by physical context and the presence of non-bilinguals, by locutionary purpose and by educational concerns. Shanaz’ example also showed how language choice can change over time, reflecting the change in relationships which occurs as children grow up and family dynamics change.

These teachers seem particularly well-placed to meet two of the Australian TESOL competencies which are:

… can understand that learning a second language is part of the process of becoming bicultural.
… can utilise bilingual assistance effectively in a range of situations
(Hogan 1994:9-10)

and one of the New Zealand draft competencies (excised from the final document as discussed in Chapter 2):

… have an understanding of bilingualism (Haddock 1998:6).

The teachers discussed here have ‘lived experience’ of bilingualism and bilingual
language use, including code-switching, and of biculturalism.

7.2.3.2 Linguistic aspects of migration
An experience common to four of the eight circumstantial bilinguals was that of migrating to Australia as children. Another bilingual teacher was born here of immigrant parents and faced many of the same issues as the others. These included encountering English for the first time on entering school, feeling different from the rest of Australian society, feeling ashamed of immigrant parents, dissociating themselves from their L1 and later feeling regret at loss or attrition of the L1 (subtractive bilingualism). A further three of this group migrated here as adults and the only migration issue mentioned by them was that of encountering a different variety of English.

The child immigrants, however, seemed to see their experience as being important in helping them to relate to their ESL students. Simone, for instance, recalls being unable to speak English when she arrived, and feeling different from the other children:

… like when I couldn’t speak English because my parents had just [arrived in Australia]. Well we never went to kindergarten and I could understand it [English] but I couldn’t really speak it, because we had four children so we mostly played together and occasionally with the neighbours’ kids or something. So I didn’t really have much exposure to English, apart from shopping with my mother and things like that, so when I went to school, although I could understand it I really - I spent the first 6 months learning it. So I sort of can relate to the fact of having to learn a language as a second language in another country … I understand the migrant perspective. (Simone)

Shanaz refers to the time it takes to settle into a new environment, and how she first encountered the Australian landscape as alien:

I feel that I can relate to students immediately because I understand their alienation … to suddenly connect with this landscape. It took many many years, and now I can be on a drive and I can mesh with the hills and the sheep because I feel they’re in me too, and it took a long long time to do that, so I understand that sense of alienation from the familiar, from the language all around you, from the people, from the food, from smells, all those things. (Shanaz)

Helena too, who was born here of migrant parents, feels that her witnessing of the hard times her parents had through not speaking English has given her a better understanding of what her students face.
I definitely … the fact that my parents came here from Austria as refugees … my mother had a very difficult experience as a migrant in Australia. (Int: You were born here?) Yeah I was born here and, and I think, um, I really value difference. So my background is more I think … if you’re talking about learning a language, it teaches you a lot of things, and coming from a [different] background or being different in a way teaches you a lot of things about the students. (Helena)

Ofra remembers herself and her sisters translating for her Polish-speaking mother with the neighbours. She also remembers the shame she felt on her parents’ behalf.

... the fact that Mum and Dad were (long pause) wogs when we were young, and had heavy accents, and were laughed at by the Australians. I guess it makes me very sympathetic and patient… (Ofra)

The immigrant experiences of these teachers place them in a position to understand and empathise with the experience of their immigrant students, a quality which Auerbach values as “understandings that come through shared life experience and cultural background” and which she maintains cannot be imparted through training (Auerbach 1993:28).

7.2.3.3 Subtractive bilingualism

Four of these teachers remembered one or other language suffering from the language contact caused by immigration in the days of assimilationist policies. Elide spoke Italian at home until she was aged five, and found in her secondary schooling that her academic English “was not as good as it could have been”, a situation which did not change, she attested, until she undertook postgraduate study. Simone said that she did not pick up a very sophisticated level of language from primary school, and went through a stage where she was mixing German and English in the same sentence:

[I would use] two words of English, three words of German and [I would] inflect German in English ways and whatever. You know, it was a total mess. (Simone)

By later taking German as a school subject Simone was able to concentrate on separating the grammar of the two languages. It was fortunate for her that she managed to sort her languages out and reach a high level of oral fluency in English, Schwäbisch and High German, and a high level of literacy in English and High German. Elide is now confidently teaching Academic English. Both teachers are well-placed to
understand the perils of achieving literacy in neither language, and the consequences thereof.

Both Ofra and Helena, whose dominant language is now English, regret the deterioration of their family’s first language through the processes of immigration and fitting into Australian society. They recall wanting to distance themselves from it as children.

My sisters were bilingual at [the age of] two or three, but we’ve all just about lost the speaking because we don’t get the opportunity to speak too much. My sister, who’s a year younger than me, we’re better, we can struggle through and sound stupid, but my younger sisters just understand everything (Int: So you still speak it, the older two?) I can, but I choose not to because I sound like my students do when they’re trying to speak English! (laugh) Also pronunciation’s very difficult. (Ofra)

… my feeling now is I wished I had [retained the language, and that] it was better. As a young kid I didn’t want to have anything to do with not being true blue Aussie, but now I really regret [it]. And as a matter of fact I’ve bought myself some Teach Yourself Polish books … but I really do regret not keeping it up. (Helena)

Helena’s loss of Austrian German began with her parents’ separation:

… my parents separated and so on and so that had had an impact on language and so on. But I did … I know that when relatives came and so on, Austrian was spoken, the Austrian dialect was spoken and I can remember understanding all those conversations and so on. But over time I didn’t communicate. Like a lot of the kids you didn’t answer, and then you lose the facility to. (Int: And you didn’t learn to read and write either?) No, I didn’t learn to read and write. (Helena)

Having grown up in Australia several decades ago where outright hostility was sometimes expressed at immigrants’ speaking their own languages (Ozolins 1993), they were anxious as children to have nothing to do with their parents’ languages, thereby proving their ‘Australianness’. They now see this as a personal loss, and while the cause of this attrition may be attributable to societal mores of the time, they also seem to blame themselves. We see again that languages tend to be viewed by the teachers as personal and private assets or indulgences (Chapter 5) or the lack thereof as personal failings (Chapter 6). The bilinguals who lost their first language(s) seem to berate

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16 This can be compared with (circumstantial bilingual) Elide’s claim in Chapter 8 that she insists that her students speak English all the time so they will get the feeling of ‘being Australian’. In other words, being Australian does not include speaking another language.
themselves personally for the loss in a similar way to how the monolinguals (Chapter 6) berate themselves for lack of ability or success in learning other languages. Both of these views (language as personal asset and language as personal failing) are components of the phenomenon that in the field of ESL, languages other than English do not have a public profile which would permit teachers to view them as part of their professional resources.

**7.2.3.4 Bilingual identity**

Helena, like others of the circumstantial bilinguals, raises the issue of how language is a powerful part of identity, even when, as in her case, she has only a largely receptive ability in Austrian German. She marks her ancestry as ‘Austrian’ in the Census and muses about why she feels the need to do this, despite her having few connections with the country, the language or the people. She concludes that growing up with Austrian-ness influenced her thinking and feeling, and sees it as a valuable part of herself, although one which is hard to define.

When I think of that sort of assimilationist approach in those days and when I think of culture I think in terms of … I’ve lost a lot of the language and so on so … what is it about me that makes me, having been born in Australia and aged 51, and with not a very strong ethnic community to support my parents and so on, what makes me still feel – that my ancestry’s Austrian? In the Census and that? I was just talking to somebody about that the other day and it is your thinking. Just how you think and feel about different things and so I think that’s just terribly important, and it’s terribly enriching. (Helena)

Shanaz explains how she feels very much bicultural and that her languages are an important part of who she is:

I grew up very much biculturally. It’s about a very deep level of acceptance, and to understand that there is that difference. And that languages are very much related to thought processes, and therefore it’s very important to retain them in order to have those different modes that are part of who you are. (Shanaz)

Simone too talked about how, as a balanced bilingual with a native-like command of English who feels Australian she nonetheless feels her two languages give her a slightly different identity:

I understand the migrant perspective because I still in a sense … I mean I feel like I’m an Australian, just not connected to Europe at all but I do have that … you can’t help it, you’ve got that background, that sort of duality, yeah. (Simone)
and although she speaks and writes High German fluently, her identity from childhood is bound up with the Schwäbian variety:

I actually spoke a dialect when we were at home. My mother spoke Schwäbian, so I’ve got a southern German accent. And if I speak German I prefer to speak that because it sounds softer: I suppose because I grew up with it. Maybe if you’d grown up with the standard German [it would be different], but having grown up with a dialect and then moving on to the sort of proper German, High German, it just sounded very stilted even to me. I didn’t feel natural speaking it, and even now I don’t really feel natural speaking it. (Simone)

These eight circumstantial bilinguals all have insights about the language experiences of bilinguals and biculturals. Several of them are familiar with the language shift which can occur with the process of migration, and its effect on the family and on children growing up within the family. They have personal experience of code-switching and they know how personal relationships and identity are both framed by and reflected in language. We might ask what relevance this has to ESL teaching, and indeed it is hard to see how this knowledge might be put into practice in the classroom. However this thesis is concerned with asking what is the knowledge base relating to language and language learning which is available to ESL teachers, and certainly it is legitimate to include knowledge of the language use of bilingual individuals and families in this for the following reason. Many adult ESL learners face the same issues as the teachers discussed in this section: language choice in families, children translating for their parents, children’s wish to avoid association with L1 and possibly regretting it later, and children having difficulty with the demands of school academic English. Adult ESL students are in the process of becoming circumstantial bilinguals, and many of them are parents of children who are contending with education in their second language and with the possible loss of their first language. These teachers know what being and becoming bilingual means in familial terms, and are thus in a better position to understand their students’ perspective.

7.2.4 Insights about the use of a LOTE as a pedagogical tool in ESL

The ESL teaching context in which this study was carried out is one where up to twenty mixed-language students are grouped together and taught via the medium of English, and hence it is extremely unlikely that the teacher will be able to speak more than one or
two of the languages represented there. It is generally frowned upon in the profession for the teacher to use the language(s) she or he does know in class, and one reason given for this is that it favours only the students who speak that language and can make the others feel excluded. There are also the many objections to the inclusion of L1 in the teaching process in general considered in Chapter 3.3 (Cook 2001, Deller and Rinvolucri 2002). Despite this general disapproval, there were quite a number of references by teachers to their own use of a LOTE with students inside and outside class.

These references have been grouped into two categories termed ‘overt use of a LOTE’ and ‘tacit use of a LOTE’. ‘Overt use’ refers to oral or written use of a language other than English by teacher or student(s). In the case of students, only examples where they are using it to directly communicate with the teacher, knowing s/he understands it, are included. Incidences of students talking to themselves or each other in L1 without directly addressing the teacher are not included here.

‘Tacit use’ refers to uses which are neither verbalized or written but are where teachers draw on their knowledge of the language to work out what students’ difficulties are, to predict student response, to determine teacher action or to explain student reaction.

Nine teachers referred to making overt use of their other language(s) in class. Five were circumstantial bilinguals, and included the three non-native speakers, and three were elective bilinguals.

One of these teachers, Rebecca, is in a different situation from that of the others since she teaches a bilingual class in Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) and English. LOTE is in this context an integral part of the class, and although Rebecca described her detailed rationale for judicious use of both languages, bilingual teaching is not the focus of this thesis. The remainder of this discussion concerns of the use of LOTE in an otherwise all-English class.

Nine teachers said that they occasionally used students’ first language(s) in class themselves. This option is obviously restricted to those teachers who speak one or more language(s) as well as English, and is further restricted to communicating with those students with whom they share the other language.
In most cases, teachers used the students’ L1 to translate a word or words, in order to speed things up, or if a student is really stuck and cannot understand the English explanation. Usually this is done orally, but one teacher who speaks and writes fluent Japanese told how he writes kanji characters on the board to help his Chinese-speaking students. One teacher uses hers in a counselling capacity, when a student has a personal problem she wishes to discuss. Another teacher described her practice of learning the greetings and keywords of as many languages as she can. Trilingual herself, she purposely extends her knowledge of languages similar to those she speaks, as well as learning isolated words in languages new to her. She does this because she feels that using a few words of the students’ languages demonstrates respect for and interest in the student. She feels it breaks the ice and shows the student that she is not superior to them. She seemed to be the only teacher who made this particular effort, and all the others used languages which were already known to them.

Occasionally when I know the students’ language - I speak Spanish - that does help to speed things up, or to confirm things and give them the word. (Pamela)

…sometimes where I’ve actually had a few words here and there I’ve translated back for somebody. (Beatrice)

As well as these examples of teachers overtly using their second languages (the students’ L1) in class, they and other teachers referred to drawing on their knowledge of other languages tacitly in a variety of ways to do with teaching. They involve a teacher drawing on his or her knowledge of the student’s L1 but not actually using it in speech or writing. One teacher made reference to being able to understand utterances in Yugoslav languages and Russian because of her Polish, without saying whether she put this understanding to use. Another maintained that it helped when she could understand students (in Spanish) because she could often determine that they were saying the wrong thing, or she could confirm that they were correct in their understanding, such as Pamela’s practice: “or when they say it you go ‘yes’”.

Another teacher found her other languages useful from a class management perspective, since she could work out whether students were helping each other in L1, which she condoned, or engaging in “chit-chat” which she did not. A teacher who is a native
speaker of Spanish described being called on by other teachers to help when Spanish-speaking students had written incomprehensible English essays.

[If] the [other] teachers cannot understand it, I look at it and if I go back and translate it into Spanish, aaah, I sort of switch and I know what it says. (Lidia)

It appears relatively common among this group of teachers to occasionally use their second language(s) either overtly or tacitly in class. It is generally restricted to translation of words, or to approving student translation of a word or words, rather than for giving long explanations. It is sometimes used for pastoral purposes, to reassure or to advise students, or to establish a basis of friendship and equality. It was also noteworthy that with the exception of one native-speaker of Spanish, all the other teachers reported using languages in which they had only medium proficiency, raising questions of how accurate and efficacious was their use.

Since using learners’ L1 is generally not condoned within the profession (as discussed in Chapter 3.3) and since it is only possible with the few learners with whom teachers share a language, it is interesting to speculate on why they do it. One explanation is that they do see their language(s) as a resource for helping students which can be used when necessary. Another explanation could be that teachers like to ‘show off’ their languages in a small way, as one teacher in fact admitted. Since those teachers who are bilingual have no opportunity to use their languages officially in the profession, it is possible that occasional use in class provides a small level of gratification for an unused resource.

7.3 Insights about language learning and language teaching from teachers’ own learning experience

One of the clearest ways in which teachers’ own language learning experience figured in the interviews was evidence of the kinds of knowledge they had gained about language learning and about language teaching from their own experiences as language learners. Four aspects of this are considered here. First is the teachers’ knowledge about their own learning strategies, learning preferences and communication strategies and the insights this gives them into what students do as language learners. Second is their knowledge about the affective aspects of being a language learner gained from their own experience, or what it is like to be a language learner. Third is their knowledge of
different teaching approaches from the perspective of a student. Fourth is knowledge of
different teaching contexts from their own experience as a teacher therein. This last
section is the only one which looks at the experience of the teacher as a teacher, unlike
the first three which consider experience as a learner. It concentrates, however, only on
teaching contexts which are made possible by teacher bilingualism, since to look at all
other possible contexts would be too wide-ranging and not relevant to the thesis.

7.3.1 Insights into learning and communication strategies from their own learning
experience

Learning and communication strategies are the techniques we use from minute-to-
minute to solve problems in second language use. Brown (1994) defines learning
strategies as those relating to processing, storage and retrieval of input, and
communication strategies as those pertaining to how we express meaning to others.
Included in this section is teachers’ talk about their own learning and communication
strategies, and also preferences for the use of certain strategies, approaches to tasks or
for learning being structured in a particular way.

Included in this section are comments from four of the circumstantial bilinguals, eight
of the elective bilinguals and one of the monolinguals. There were several comments
from experienced language learners which described in detail some of their own
approaches to tasks or learning strategies. Lidia, for example, told how she improved
her extensive listening when she arrived in Australia by keeping the radio on whenever
she was home, at first understanding very little, then picking up words and phrases, then
whole sentences until eventually she found she was understanding everything she heard
without being conscious of any effort. She also explained how her study of systemic
functional grammar had led her to analyse her own essays and aim for a written rather
than a spoken style by reducing the number of verbs she used and using more
nominalisation. She referred to her tendency when learning English to apply rules from
her L1 (Spanish), and sees her students doing the same. As a non-native speaker she
thus described two productive learning strategies she had used in learning English
which could also be applied by her students, and one counterproductive strategy, which
she sees herself as well-placed to recognise and counsel students against. Anna gave an
example of how she was able to use visualisation of the written word in French to
understand what she was hearing, and to generalise from patterns.
One of the things that helped me in French was being able to visualise words. As soon as I realised, the word ‘nation’ for example, it looks the same in both languages, and I realised I had to listen for ‘nation’ [as pronounced in French] instead of ‘nation’ [in English] and I transferred that to other words that had the same form. I started to be able to recognise words by mentally [making that adjustment], and with Krio it was the same thing because a lot of the pronunciation was just the distortion of the vowels. (Anna)

Fiona explained how when she lived in Uzbekistan she found she did not retain vocabulary she had simply looked up in the dictionary, but found she had to use it and hear it in a meaningful context before it would stick in her memory. Colin, too, as a highly successful language learner, has a keen awareness of his own strategies for learning new words, which he makes very explicit to his students:

… like you know, you look up a word, and you learn it and then the next time you see that word you can’t remember what it is, and then you’ve got to look it up again, and then you might remember it the next time. And [the students are] all going “oh yeeees,” and that’s my way of saying to them “I know what it’s like - I don’t expect you to hear a word today and remember it for ever because I know that it doesn’t work like that - if it doesn’t work that way for me it’s not going to work that way for you”. (Colin)

Six teachers attested to behaving in similar ways to their students in the learning process, sometimes against the grain of what they believed to be good practice. Hence Greta, although she has studied a lot of grammar, in her words “freaked out” and “switched off” when teachers used grammatical metalanguage with her. Lidia mentioned being familiar with her own tendency to avoid aspects of language learning which she found difficult, such as phonetics because she found the symbols intimidating. Val was astounded to find herself answering for her husband when they both studied French in a class together, something for which she had previously chided students. Fiona found, living in an entirely L2 environment that she had to phone English-speaking friends regularly to speak English, because otherwise she felt that she had not properly understood and digested the events of the day:

… because I just had to tell someone in English what was going on, what was happening, like, all these things would happen and I didn’t feel I’d processed it until I’d told somebody about it in English ‘oh they did this, and they did that’ and so on. (Fiona)

Colin claimed to sympathise with students looking up vocabulary items in bilingual dictionaries because he finds that in his study of Japanese he wants to know a word’s equivalence in English, despite his considerable sophistication as a language learner:
I mean I speak at a really high level, my Japanese is certainly a lot better than [my students’] English. But when I look up a word, when I see a Japanese word I don’t know, I’ve got umpteen dictionaries, I’ve got Japanese-English, I’ve got Japanese-Japanese, I’ve got a whole library of dictionaries, but my first point of reference will be a Japanese-English dictionary. If I can’t find it in a Japanese-English dictionary then I will look it up in the Japanese-Japanese dictionary, but I mean I want to know what it is in *English*.

(Colin)

The only monolingual in this section, Tina, referred to two aspects of her own behaviour as a learner of Japanese which she disapproved of in her own students: looking up everything in a bilingual dictionary and feeling the need to speak her own language in class. This provides us with an example of how teachers’ own learning experience sometimes conflicts with the ‘received knowledge’ from their training and the unchallenged nostrums which proliferate in the profession. A parallel is seen in Birch’s (1992) study of Australian student teachers learning Thai in Thailand (discussed in Chapter 3.5), wherein student teachers also used their L1 in class in contravention of their espoused beliefs.

Five of the bilinguals expressed very explicit knowledge of their own preferences for particular approaches as learners. Greta, as suggested above, professed to hate grammar-oriented teaching and to much prefer learning through speaking and listening activities and using authentic materials. She described her ability to learn by ear and through using the language communicatively, but an inability to learn and apply rules. Simone, on the other hand, another high-level bilingual, expressed her dislike of a course she took where she had to learn situational dialogues, preferring to be taught grammar, and carrying that through to her own teaching:

… a lot of teaching’s done through dialogues and sort of, you go shopping and you learn this dialogue and so [on]. That’s why I sort of prefer to teach the grammar because I can’t learn just a pattern when I don’t know what the individual bits mean. If I just have to learn you know ‘bla bla bla’ means ‘I’m going to the shop’ or something, I want to know which bit means what and so I’m not very good at learning in that way. I need the grammatical structure, yeah, so I can use it, not just parroting off patterns or sentences which might relate to a certain situation but [which] I don’t know if I can use here or anywhere else. (Simone)

Susan, too, is a grammar-oriented learner, wanting to know “the mechanics” of a language as she put it. Pamela, studying Spanish in Bolivia, knew that:
… you don’t want to learn stuff that’s irrelevant, you want to learn something that you’ll be able to go out and help you tomorrow [sic]. (Pamela)

Pamela would conscientiously prepare for encounters with Spanish-speakers by looking up all the words she anticipated using and practising the questions in her head.

Colin mentioned the effect of personal preferences on learning vocabulary, finding that some words were instantly memorable because they resonated somehow with him:

… there are some words that are just … you like that word … for some reason the sound of it just appeals to you. It’s like a word in your own language that may or may not mean the same thing, but somehow it just clicks [and] you remember it on one hearing. (Colin)

The focus of the next three comments is on communication strategies, defined as “the employment of verbal or non-verbal mechanisms for the productive communication of information” (Brown 1994:118). Two teachers who lived in an L2 environment with their spouses commented on their different approach to using the language. Beatrice described herself as a “boots and all” user of French in contrast to her husband’s more cautious approach to speaking:

… so I got all the language practice, and it was a habit that we easily fell into. He was a sort of learner, unlike me, I would just would vault in and even if I didn’t have the words, or I’d just paraphrase, if I didn’t have the grammar doesn’t matter. -If I wanted to get my message across I was in, feet and all. My husband was the sort who felt he wanted to sit back and absorb the language and then … he started speaking. (Beatrice)

Beatrice here is describing her tendency to be ‘a risk-taker’ in language learning, and her husband’s preference for listening and absorbing before attempting to speak. Experience of both of these approaches is very likely useful to Beatrice in recognising the differing approaches her students take to learning.

Pamela, as mentioned above, tended to over-prepare her speaking encounters, in contrast to her husband who had an approach to communication more in line with Beatrice’s. Colin had firm views on the importance of learning a lot of vocabulary, since he had found in his experience of living in three countries that he could
communicate if he had the words, despite having an imperfect grasp of the grammar. He described the importance of being able to paraphrase to get his message across.

In summary, thirteen teachers made explicit reference to knowledge of their own strategies for language learning and use: four circumstantial bilinguals, eight elective bilinguals and one monolingual. All of them had had experience of formal instruction in one or more languages post-childhood, which lends itself to reflection on learning and teaching in ways that early familial language acquisition does not. There were comments about specific strategies teachers used to improve their listening, to generalise from correlations in sound and spelling, and to learn new vocabulary. Six teachers compared their own strategies to those they had seen their students use. Five teachers talked of their preferences for courses structured in particular ways, for example grammatically- or functionally-based, and three related specific communication strategies they had used when in a second-language environment. We see here teachers talking about the ‘experiential knowledge’ (Wallace 1991) or ‘knowing-in-action (Schön 1995) they have gained from their own experience as language learners, as well as frequently making spontaneous links between this knowledge and their teaching of ESL.

7.3.2 Insights into the affective aspects of being a language learner from their own learning experience

The previous section considered knowledge which teachers had gained from their own experience about what they do as language learners, in terms of approaches to tasks, learning strategies and communication strategies. This section will consider the knowledge teachers have about being a language learner, or the affective aspects. Affective aspects, according to Brown (1994) include anxiety, inhibition, empathy and self-esteem. Ellis’ discussion of learners’ affective states refers to learners’ need to feel secure and free of stress before they can concentrate on language learning (Ellis 1994:479), and focusses mainly on the effects of anxiety on learning, although he also mentions ‘culture shock’.
7.3.2.1 Identifying oneself as a model of a learner to the students

Three of the bilinguals made it clear that they identified themselves as language learners to their students. Two were non-native speakers circumstantial bilinguals who saw themselves in the ongoing process of learning English, whereas the third was a native-speaker elective bilingual who makes a practice of talking to his students about his learning of three other languages. All three seemed to see this modelling of themselves as learners as a key resource in motivating and encouraging their students. As Greta puts it:

I know what it’s like to learn a language. I’m still learning English today! Like it’s still got some words that I come across that I don’t understand or sentences, or the way people speak. I’m still writing essays where I leave out things that should be there, like finite verbs and things like that. … I’m like “Why? This sentence sounds perfectly fine to me” so you’re still - you’re always learning, learning, learning all the time! (Greta)

…yeah, I always say to them “as a learner, this is what I advise you’, as a teacher this is what I advise you”, I always say “don’t forget that I’m a learner as well”, so, I think that’s important. I’m not just a teacher, I’m a learner. Yeah, it is encouraging, so I just say, look if I could do it, you can do it too. Yeah, it’s hard, it’s hard, and they say “Oh this is so difficult” and I say “Yes, I know” so in some way, they see me as “Oh no, she can do it, maybe I can do it too”. (Lidia)

… and then I will also introduce myself and tell them about myself. And of course I tell them what my background is and that I’ve done various languages and taught them and travelled there and so on. And then I always say to them … I do understand … I know what it’s like and I understand, I’m sympathetic. So they sort of see there’s another side to me and that I’m not just a teacher, but that I’m also a student. I think that’s really important, that students realise that we love learning too, and that we’re not just standing there saying “I’ve got all the knowledge and I’m imparting it to you”. (Colin)

Greta stresses that she is still engaged in learning English on a daily basis, as are her students, and refers to her own bewilderment on occasions when her written English is corrected. Lidia, a more experienced and highly qualified teacher, also represents herself as a learner of English, but with a little more confidence than Greta that she has achieved success, as is suggested in “if I could do it, you can too”. Colin emphasises to students that he has a love of learning rather than being an autocratic teacher. As a native speaker he has to work a little harder to make the same point as the first two by telling students about his learning of LOTEs. He also takes pains to let students teach him phrases of their languages during break times, again to show the solidarity he feels
with them and to show himself as vulnerable and willing to make mistakes, as this extract shows:

… I’ll practice. The other day in a morning tea break, there’s a few Chinese standing around and I was practising, and I was drinking a cup of coffee and I was saying [in Chinese] “I like coffee”. I mean my Chinese is almost minimal, but I was saying “I like coffee” and they were saying “No, that’s the wrong tone” and they were correcting me, and they thought that was just wonderful, they love it… (Colin)

These three teachers give the impression from their talk that they see their own status as language learners as giving credibility to their teaching. They use it to establish a kind of solidarity with their students which suggests that they are all engaged in the same process, but the teachers are further along the path than are the learners. They are both models and mentors in the difficult task of acquiring a second language. In the case of the two non-native speakers, evidence of their success is demonstrated daily to the students in their teaching of English, the language in which they are still learners. The native speaker has to make a more conscious effort to bring tales of his own language learning struggles into the classroom, but his intentions are the same.

7.3.2.2 Identifying with or empathising with students in one’s own mind

In the above section we saw teachers representing themselves as learners explicitly to their students. In this section I will examine a different aspect: statements made by teachers about how their own language learning helps them to understand what language learning is like and to empathise with students. Whether this stance is communicated to students or not is not possible to say from the data, but we can say that the teachers believe that they know what their students are facing.

Thirteen of the bilinguals and three of the monolinguals claimed that their own experience of learning a language, and/or living in a second language culture gave them a feeling of ‘being in the students’ shoes’, and an ability to empathise with students. Common expressions were “I know what it’s like to learn a language” and “I know what it’s like on the receiving end” and included the following general statements from bilinguals:

… because I’ve done a little bit of Spanish and I’ve learned Spanish which was a good way for me to understand how it feels to learn another language. (Ofra)
… just empathy I think, just being able to put myself in students’ shoes. (Susan)

…it puts you always in the position of the student yet again, and you’re sort of seeing things through the student’s eyes rather than the teacher’s eyes … so it’s about … I mean just I think the most useful thing is putting yourself in the student’s place all the time. (Orla)

I think it does, like I think I’m aware of what they’re going through, like trying to cope with the new language. (Fiona)

These comments are made by both circumstantial and elective bilinguals, but only about elective bilingual experience. In other words, these insights into ‘what it’s like to be a learner’ come from experiencing language learning at a conscious level as opposed to growing up with two languages. Most of the experiences which generated such insights involved formal learning, although informal learning such as ‘picking up’ a language in the country was also credited by some as generating empathy for students. The main point is, though, that the experience has to be available for reflection, which rules out early childhood learning.

Even a minimal amount of language learning seems to awaken the kind of empathy teachers talk of, as demonstrated by the two monolinguals’ views. Sharon only has experience of a few beginners’ classes in each of two languages, yet she maintains:

… and yeah, so I’ve never really learned another language, but I think having experienced some kind of language lesson I guess it gives me a bit of empathy with the students. (Sharon)

Michelle, another monolingual, is responsible for training ESL home tutors, and she talks about a mini-language learning experience she sets up for them precisely to give the feeling of ‘being in the student’s shoes’:

… we do have a little video about making numbers useful, and somebody’s teaching 1-6 actually, in Swedish … so [the Home Tutors] will know what the student feels like. (Michelle)

Here Michelle is recognising the value of a structured ‘language learning experience’ (LLE), as discussed in Chapter 3.2, as a professional development tool. Home tutors are volunteer members of the public who may never have learned another language, and Michelle clearly sees this kind of experiential learning as valuable for them to ‘know what the student feels like’. 

251
Three bilingual teachers, one an immigrant to Australia, referred to their experience of learning a second language in the country, as their students do.

I spent the first 6 months learning [English], so I sort of can relate to the fact of having to learn a language as a second language in another country … so I suppose that kind of helps a little bit too. (Simone)

Colin talked of his spending periods of time living in Japan with no other English speakers around, and how intimidating it could be. He further says that it is worse for his students as instead of living here as visitors they have to deal with the bureaucracies of health, education and social security. Anna too remembers the experience of living in France and claims that the empathy for her students this gives her informs her teaching philosophy and approach:

I studied French, and I lived in Paris for about three months after I finished at school and worked as an au pair, so I know what it’s like to be on the receiving end: not be able to quite catch what everyone is saying. And also I think I appreciate the difficulty of having to express yourself in this other language, there’s so much you want to say that doesn’t come out the way you really feel it should. So I think that’s a fairly major component actually of my sort of philosophy of teaching and my approach. (Anna)

As well as the general difficulties of learning a language in the classroom, which is experienced by the elective bilinguals discussed above, these three teachers have experienced the added stress of living in the target language country as a learner, surrounded by the language and needing it to survive in education, work, health and bureaucratic contexts. Anna stresses the dual problem of missing a lot of what is said, and of never being able to express one’s own meaning as accurately or as fully as one would like. She makes a direct link between this experience and “my philosophy of teaching and my approach”.

Three teachers stressed the understanding that comes from living in a very different culture, and how that gives empathy with their students. Fiona, living with a peasant family in Central Asia said:

… it’s so different from here, nothing is the same. One of the other American girls that I knew over there used to always say “life as we know it no longer exists” - nothing was the same, and I know that some of our students feel like that. (Fiona)
Penny found the same from living in India, while Pamela, who had worked in several countries, talked of her understanding of how

… things work totally differently in different places, not just at a language level but at education level and about interaction with people. (Pamela)

Pamela also claimed that ESL teachers are not only teaching language but teaching the students how to learn in a different culture. Two other teachers mentioned the empathy with students they had gained from facing specific challenges similar to those which face the students. In Anna’s case it was the experience of trying to get opportunities to practise the language with locals while living in France: desperately wanting to practise, but lacking an entrée to the society. Val recounted knowing how students feel when reaching mental overload in a language lesson, and how her brain shut down and refused to take in any more.

7.3.2.3 Experience of the frustration and/or difficulties that students undergo

The comments of six teachers (three bilingual and three monolingual) suggested that frustrations they had felt as language learners gave them insights into what students experience.

Lidia remembers clearly her frustration as a non-native speaker learning English, but this frustration is tempered by her ultimate success, as she also remembers how she overcame the difficulties:

… the frustration is one of the things you never forget and you remember that you had similar problems and what you did to overcome [them] … that’s definitely something that has helped me a lot [as a teacher], it has given me an insight of first of all the learning process, er, the frustration when you can’t get something done. (Lidia)

Beatrice’s frustration arose from working in Italy and being unable to communicate with those around her because of her rudimentary Italian. Although she did not need the language with the same urgency for survival as do her students, she still felt it a waste or a lost opportunity to make connections with people.
… how much I would have loved to communicate with people just on a friendly basis, just a social chit-chat, passing by. An old man hanging over a fence or something, and just thinking what a shame I don’t have the language. And really, sort of frustration, and so it gave me a new empathy to our students here. (Beatrice)

Three other teachers focussed on the difficulties of learning, or trying to learn a language as an adult, as their students do.

I’ve learned not to be a threatening sort of a teacher and to appreciate the difficulties in coming to this country. It’s not easy picking up a language, especially when you’re older, and I think I appreciate the values and stresses…(Tina)

… just that it’s really difficult to learn a second language as an adult I think, and I do believe that the older you are the more difficult it is … yes, just that it’s really difficult, and that it takes a lot of concentration and a lot of mental energy to learn and that it’s not easy to remember what you’ve done last week, like “Don’t you remember it this week? Well why not?” (Frances)

I think that [my language learning experience] certainly helps, that certainly makes you realise how difficult it is to learn a language. Yes, just the concepts, and especially as an adult learner, as an older learner. (Mary)

While there is inconclusive evidence that language learning is more difficult for adults than for younger people, there is a very widespread popular belief that it is. What is generally agreed is that language learning is often difficult for adults because of the demands of adult life: family, work and the fact of being a migrant trying to get established in a new country. Even when these stresses are absent, many adults, including several of the teachers here, attempt to learn a language in evening classes when tiredness may well have an effect on learning.

The understanding of frustration for four teachers, one accomplished bilingual and three monolinguals was based on lack of success with learning a language.

I know how frustrating it is. You think, you know, you think you’ve got this word imprinted on your mind for ever and you’ve concentrated so hard on it, and then suddenly it’s gone! Yeah, it’s very irritating! Yes, so I’ve got this appreciation of just how difficult it is. (Connie)

Two of the comments from bilinguals demonstrated a frustration with teaching rather than the process of learning itself. Both of these teachers had learned a language
formally to a high level before the experience and their talk suggests that they were in a position to judge the teaching they received on that basis. Beatrice talked about undergoing a placement interview at a language centre in France and feeling that she had been unfairly assessed and placed in a level too low for her because of not remembering one vocabulary item.

I was a little bit disgruntled after the initial interview that I’d been put in too low a class. I had in the interview to describe a picture. and I remember not being able to remember the word for an apron. It was a picture of a woman in a kitchen or something, wearing an apron and I felt at the time that my assessor had decided because I couldn’t find that word that I had been put down a level. (Beatrice)

Anna, when learning a new language in a continuing education centre had become totally frustrated when the teacher spoke entirely in L2:

… and after about 2 hours you could see people starting to get angry and I myself was feeling ‘oh you know, what’s the point of all this, I don’t understand a word’ so … no, I think when people come here and they’re thrown into English … all the time they must feel like that. This is … must be the experience of people when they come here. (Anna)

Anna here points to the frustration caused by the very situation in which her ESL students are placed, in which the lesson is conducted entirely in the target language.

The frustrations referred to here include those arising from formal classroom learning, from being immersed in the language in-country, from learning as an adult, the frustration caused by lack of success in learning, and frustrations caused by the teaching situation. Recognition of these frustrations of language learning are described here by both bilingual and monolingual teachers. Even one of the most successful and high level bilinguals, Lidia, remembers clearly her early struggles, and, like the other teachers quoted here, uses them to appreciate and empathise with her students’ difficulties. However, in the same sentence she also recalls what she did to overcome her difficulties, so for her not only the problems but the solutions arise from her own experience. The bilinguals, as discussed in Chapter 6, while appreciating the difficulties, also have language learning successes to reflect on and compare them with. The monolinguals tend to have only the difficulties to focus on, but they still appear to use these in constructive ways as Tina points out:

I’ve learned not to be a threatening sort of a teacher. (Tina)
She, like others of the monolingual teachers, uses her own bad experiences to inform her approach to her students and to avoid putting them in stressful situations in class.

7.3.2.4 Experience of the humiliation and threat to one’s ego posed by language learning

The above section looked at teachers’ experience of feelings of frustration and being faced with a difficult task. All learning situations can present frustration and difficulty, but because language is so closely tied to one’s identity and ability to present oneself to others through verbal communication and appropriate non-verbal behaviour, the potential for humiliation when learning is great. Inability to express meaning or to understand others, saying the wrong thing, using the wrong register, or feeling as if one is using childlike language can all undermine confidence and the sense of self which is necessary in order to operate as an adult in any society. The link between confident use of language and an adult’s ego is well recognised in the literature, and it is also acknowledged that formal classroom instruction can present a considerable threat to that ego (Guiora 1972, Guiora et al. 1980). The following comments by six teachers, five bilingual and one monolingual, show how this is borne out by their own experience.

… because they [students] must feel so dumb! Like I know how I feel. When I went with my Mum and Dad to a bingo session in the Polish club and these women wanted to speak to me, well I just spoke Polish because I had to be polite, but I felt like an idiot - and that’s how they feel! (Ofra)

[re learning Italian] you suddenly remind yourself how much of a struggle it is [and] how humiliating it is as an adult, not being able to express yourself. (Beatrice)

Language learning can be one of the most … it can be a frightening experience, and I think we’ve got to be really aware of how painful it can be to be put in situations as an adult where you … your whole … you’re sort of saying: ‘Excuse me, I am not an idiot’ you know. I feel [for] people with the pronunciation [because] I think that is really painful. (Helena)

Elide, a circumstantial bilingual in English and Italian, remembers vividly her first foray into formal language learning when she took a course in Mandarin at evening college. She found she was terrified that the teacher would choose her to speak or answer a question:
… your ego’s on the line, whether you like it or not, it really was on the line, you know. [The teacher] would come around and you’d go “aaagh”, you panic, you feel: “I’ve made a fool of myself again”, and you think, gee, your ego is under so much … I mean unholy stressssss. (Elide)

Sharon, the only monolingual in this section, described the feeling of not knowing what is going on in a country where she did not speak the language, and how that affected her identity and confidence:

I guess you walk around in a bit of a sort of haze, but you miss a lot. I guess there was always a feeling that ‘I don’t really quite know what’s going on around me’ because I can’t hear it or talk about it, yeah, so I guess it changes your view of yourself a bit. So I guess, yeah putting myself in peoples’ shoes who are here, just in terms of identity and confidence and things like that, it could really be, be quite hard. (Sharon)

Fiona, living with a family in-country, related how she felt she was sometimes treated like a child or a simpleton because of her imperfect grasp not only of the language but also of everyday household matters such as food storage:

… [The Uzbeks] have fermented cabbage, you know, like the Koreans do? With chilli and stuff? They have that as well, and they wanted me to go and put it back in the thing [container] and I wasn’t sure what I was supposed to do, and I went back and said “I’m sorry, I don’t know what to do”, and they thought I was an idiot. I’ve had people talk to me like I was two years old, and all of those things which our students experience as well. (Fiona)

Almost all the above quotes use forceful language to express the threat to the adult ego of having to speak in another language: they talk of feeling “dumb”, “like an idiot” and “a fool”, of a “humiliating” “frightening” “painful” experience, and of having one’s “ego on the line” and being under “unholy stress”. Clearly these are not experiences to be passed over lightly. All of the teachers allude to how this experience gives them insights into what their students go through: “that’s how they feel” “we’ve got to be aware of how painful it can be” “it must be really really difficult - those little poor little blossoms - you’ve got to admire them”. These are reflections unprompted by the researcher, since there were no direct questions aimed at eliciting this kind of information. These anecdotes and stories emerged spontaneously, and from this it is reasonable to conclude that they form a conscious part of the teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about how to approach their ESL teaching to adults.
7.3.3 Insights into different teaching approaches from the perspective of a student

Another kind of knowledge from teachers’ own experience which became evident from the interview transcripts was knowledge of different teaching methods or teaching approaches to which they had been subjected as language learning students. One definition of a teaching approach is “theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching” (Richards and Rodgers 2001:20). The same authors define a teaching method as one which includes an approach, a design for learning and recommended or prescribed procedures for the classroom. While teachers usually learn about a variety of approaches and methods in teacher education courses and several of the teachers in this study had been teaching long enough to see various methods come and go, personal experience of methods as a student adds an extra experiential dimension to this kind of knowledge.

Two main aspects of this issue are considered below: firstly experience of classrooms where the learners’ L1 is not the medium of instruction, and secondly experience of different teaching methods. Finally instances are given of teachers discussing how the knowledge deriving from this experience is put to practice in their own teaching.

7.3.3.1 Experience of the medium of instruction not being L1

Two of the non-native speakers had experience of learning English through English, as well as studying other subjects via the medium of English. For Rebecca, (a non-native English speaking circumstantial bilingual), a big change occurred when she entered high school in Hong Kong. She had previously studied English as a foreign language, as a single subject, but on entering high school everything was in English except for the Chinese language subject. She found the sudden transition hard to deal with, but eventually got used to it and maintains that her English improved rapidly because of it:

… so yes, it is hard. It was hard the first year, but then afterwards I gradually started adjusting and then I learned a lot more. I suspect that my English was built up much faster then, of course using it as a medium to learn, you’re just using it all the time. (Rebecca)

Lidia, another non-native English speaking circumstantial bilingual, first encountered an English-medium classroom at university when she was studying to be an English teacher, and maintained that:
... that’s why I couldn’t understand a word for three months (laugh) it’s true, that’s definitely true. (Lidia)

Another of the circumstantial bilinguals, Shanaz, grew up trilingually in a non-English speaking country but attended an English-medium school. Although she spoke Urdu at home with her father she also studied it as a foreign language, thereby encountering the language in both formal and informal contexts, as medium and as target.

One of the native-speaker elective bilinguals (Susan) had experienced French as the medium of her schooling when her family lived in Geneva. Aged 10 when they arrived, she talks of having to “sink or swim” in a French-language school, and how that means she can identify strongly with the students in the same situation in Australia. She says that she did not enjoy the year, but did learn French to quite a high level, before attending an international English-medium school for the last two years of their posting.

Helena, a circumstantial bilingual in Austrian/English, and at the time also a fluent French speaker, had attended a French-medium language school and enjoyed it immensely:

… although in struggling with learning French I was delighted to be taught French through French because it struck me as ‘Wow, this is really French’ because this is full-on the whole time, the whole thing. Every explanation [was] in French and I actually really enjoyed that. (Helena)

Felicity, a late elective bilingual, had a different experience, learning an L3 (French) as a beginner through the medium of L2 (Indonesian) which she already spoke fairly well. She found it a useful way to learn, and describes the cross-lingual and interlingual strategies she used to make sense of the French she was hearing.

I thought it was a rather efficient way of learning because it means that I wasn’t too dependent on the language of instruction. I tended to look for … go straight to French, try to rely more on the French, and I suppose sort of intuitively use English for thinking about French, you know. I guess in a way you become a bit more aware of languages as codes, and that for example if she was giving an explanation of something I might look for a visual clue about it, or just rely on French to get the meaning, rather than spend a lot of time working in Indonesian to get to the French. (Felicity)

She feels that this experience broadened her repertoire as a language learner, forcing her to focus more on the target language than on the language of instruction, and to make
mental comparisons with her own first language (English) which was not used in the classroom at all.

Two of the native-speaker elective bilinguals had experience of L2-medium instruction in university contexts in Australia. Anna found her first experience of direct-method Japanese quite easy, but a second course with a teacher who talked constantly left her angry and frustrated. She concluded that the skills of the teacher are an important factor in teaching via the target language. Paula, also a native-speaker elective bilingual, who was studying second-year university Spanish during the year of interview, found she could cope well with Spanish as the medium of instruction, but opined that in her first year (which was taught in English) she would not have coped:

I would not have [had] a clue what they were talking about - and that’s the situation of low level learners [in our ESL classes]. (Paula)

Generally, those who had experienced instruction in L2 (or L3) at higher levels liked it – those who experienced it at low levels found it hard and upsetting. Those at high levels who reflected on how they would have coped at a low level also concluded that they would not have coped well. Both good and bad experiences seem to provide the opportunity to consider the features of instruction in L2 and how it might affect their students.

7.3.3.2 Experience of different teaching methods as a student

Several teachers referred to their experience of different methods or approaches to language teaching. Greta, a non-native speaker of English and a circumstantial bilingual with elective bilingual experience, compared grammar-oriented teaching she had in Finnish and German with the mostly communicative teaching she had had in English, and discussed how she much preferred the latter and learned better with it. She gave a graphic example of the uselessness of decontextualised grammar teaching:

… we had to learn ‘can may must ought to shall will’ but I don’t know WHAT it’s for, but we had to learn it! (Greta)

In reciting rapidly a list of modal auxiliaries which was clearly learned by rote with no understanding of their application, she makes a striking contrast with her near-native standard of English. She obviously now knows very well how to use these modal
auxiliaries, but she learned this through communicative practice, and not through chanting grammar ‘rules’. She also referred to how ESL classes tended to go at the pace of the students, whereas the pace of her (university) Italian class was set by the demands of the curriculum, and if students couldn’t keep up it was their problem, and they would fail. She is therefore able to compare a needs-based approach with an approach based on the requirements of standardised exams.

Simone, a circumstantial bilingual, had studied German through a grammar-oriented correspondence course, and she compared how French was taught at her school through studying dialogues and practising dialogues. Although she enjoyed the latter she found that it resulted in a very piecemeal knowledge of the language:

… my grammar was still hopeless, still just a total muddle because I think we’d sort of learned it in bits and pieces, but we had learned through these conversational-type things and I just … you know, I knew lots of words but I couldn’t really … I didn’t really know exactly how to put it together even after six years. (Simone)

She also studied Japanese via The Silent Way (Gattegno 1976) and remains an ardent supporter of the method. When asked how she would prefer to learn an additional language in ideal circumstances she also said that she would love to do it via The Silent Way. Having grown up bilingual, and learned High German and French to near-native levels as well as having studied Japanese and Spanish, Simone is well-placed to articulate her support of or dislike for the various teaching methods to which she has been exposed.

Beatrice, a native-speaking elective bilingual, recalls learning French at school via the grammar-translation method, then studying in France through a communicative approach. She had a further experience learning Indonesian from a private teacher using home-made worksheets, and found the lack of a textbook disconcerting.

Fiona, another elective bilingual, had a poor experience during a term of studying Italian with an untrained teacher:

I just sat there going “Oh this is so hopeless, this is NOT how I would do it”. Like he didn’t explain things, he didn’t start from the beginning, he didn’t … he just translated everything, he got us to drill
things that were fairly useless. He got us to learn great big lists of useless vocabulary, nothing in context, it was just shocking. (Fiona)

Fiona used this experience to confirm her own convictions about the use of contextualised language, textual sources and top-down approaches. These examples show how profound impressions about teaching method are formed during the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie 1975) which these teachers describe. While teachers need to learn about the merits or failings of various approaches to language teaching through formal teacher education, the experiences described here are also accessible to them as contributors to the formation of their own professional beliefs about teaching methods. The following section describes how teachers reported applying the insights from their own experiences as students.

7.3.3.3 How insights from their own experience are applied

There were numerous references from teachers which suggested that they drew on insights gained from specific experiences as students to inform their teaching. While this section may include insights gained from a specific teaching method considered in the previous section, the examples here are also at a micro-teaching level, for example a specific technique or a resolve to act in a particular way.

Nineteen comments from fifteen bilingual teachers and four monolingual teachers came into this category. As elsewhere a ‘comment’ may be an oral text, after transcription, of up to half a page and parts of a ‘comment’ may be analysed separately to extract the various relevant points.

There were three very general comments from three bilingual teachers (Greta, NNS circumstantial bilingual, Lidia (NNS circumstantial bilingual), Susan (native-speaker elective bilingual) which told of them consciously trying to model themselves on good teachers they had had in the past, and avoiding the practices of those they saw as poor teachers. Comments from the other teachers, which are more specific and informative, have been sorted into two groups. The first grouping contains comments which centre on teachers’ resolve to slow down their teaching pace, or to be more patient as a result of their own experience. The second grouping is of teachers’ use of particular teaching techniques as a result of their own experience.
Six bilinguals and two monolinguals referred to their own language learning experience as a catalyst which made them realise the importance of slowing down their presentation or explanation of new items, and of giving students enough time to process new language. Several comments, like that of Elide, below, give the impression that the teacher experienced the insight in quite a dramatic way, as a revelation.

When I finished that course in Mandarin … that was only about three years ago, I went back and I said to my classes – “I will slow down - and tell me if I do anything too fast, I will repeat until you all understand”. (Elide)

[I remember in my language class] getting so dazed, and thinking “now I must … when I’m going to do an explanation I must keep it really simple - one word explanation or one or two”, because if you go off on a great big long bla bla bla bla, then the person feels overwhelmed. (Val)

If you've been the one struggling to understand the concept, the instruction to do an activity or whatever, you will never again get impatient with people for being slow, stupid and so on. (Paula)

All three of the above teachers are reporting on formal language learning in an adult context which clearly made a strong impression on them. Elide’s comment “I - will - slow - down….I - will –repeat” was given with an intentional pause between each word, and delivered through semi-clenched teeth, to indicate the strength of her renewed commitment to be comprehensible to her learners as a direct result of her Mandarin experience.

Anna referred to how, following her own experience, she consciously tries to give students time to get their message across without interrupting:

…so I try and make allowance for them to … I try and give them time to you know find the words, or rephrase things if they want to … I also try to hear them out too instead of interrupting. (Anna)

Tina learned not only the importance of patience but also the necessity of allowing students to take risks with their oral language without the threat of being constantly corrected.

I learned to be patient and to allow students to take risks and not to correct or over-correct all the time. (Tina)
Hilary refers to the impression her own struggle with learning Spanish made on her estimation of how much time and repetition was necessary before students could absorb new words.

I used to think, for instance, that it must be very boring to hear the same thing over and over again, and repeated in different way. And then when I was sitting in class learning I’d think “Please don’t teach me another word, please let me say that again and again and again and again!” (laugh) and I think it did impress me on how important it was not to introduce masses of new material. To give time for things to be absorbed, and made part of your vocabulary before you moved onto something else. (Hilary)

All of the above teachers, both bilingual and monolingual, have in common the salutary experience of realising that they need to go slowly and to repeat parts of a lesson in order to avoid putting their students through the same frustration and embarrassment they suffered. They would certainly have considered issues of pace and repetition in their training and day-to-day teaching experience, but personal experience as a learner appears to provide new insights which challenges their previously-held beliefs.

The second grouping of comments is of teachers’ references to the use of specific teaching techniques as a result of their own experience. Anna told how she will sometimes supply a word for a student who is struggling to find the right one, having experienced how that helped her:

… occasionally I … if they can’t find a word, I’ll suggest one, because I remember, for me, if I was talking, if I was speaking French and someone supplies the word you’re trying to find, it’s so satisfying, it’s exactly what you want to say and then you store it away for another time. (Anna)

… once you’re in that classroom, you’ve got to feel free to make mistakes, feel free to ask questions, feel free to do stupid things, and not get into trouble. (Elide)

Elide talked of her experience as both a teacher and student of other languages, and how that gave her different perspectives from those of “other ESOL teachers”. She makes the point that what she knows from her personal experience is different from what she learned in her teacher education studies.

The second thing [is] because I’m also a LOTE teacher and I teach Italian as well, and I have studied other languages. I also believe in a lot of things that other ESOL teachers don’t believe in … like repetition, like correction: a lot of people don’t believe that you should correct. I believe that you should correct. I believe that you should repeat and make them repeat. I believe in memorisation and that sort of
thing, and … oh what else? [I believe] the more work you do, the better it is, the more you’re going to learn, which is not necessarily what we were told when we were doing our Grad Dip and our Masters. (Elide)

Elide is thus able to challenge what she was taught on her TESOL courses because of her experience in teaching another language. This is despite her assertion, elsewhere in the interview, that on enrolling in her first TESOL course, she and other LOTE teachers were told to “forget all you know about language teaching”. The clear implication here was that teaching English is qualitatively different from teaching other languages, a position which Elide, having both experiences, is able to dispute.

Paula’s response to the question: “Do your other languages contribute to your ESL teaching?” was given in writing, since part of the audiotape was later discovered to have malfunctioned and three questions were subsequently re-asked by email. For that reason it is a more considered and lengthy response than the other, oral responses, and it mentions several ways in which she has modified her practice since beginning to study Spanish:

You also [through your own language learning] learn the importance of such basic things as punctuality in a teacher, well-presented, legible materials, a willingness on the part of the teacher to accept you as being where you are instead of rousing on you because you're not at where they think you ought to be! … I also think explicit grammar teaching is a must, together with follow up exercises to help you grasp the form, and then controlled communicative activities where you get the chance to use the correct form to achieve a task. … Also such stuff as classroom control. I HATE being in a [Spanish] class where everyone is talking so loudly [in English] that you can't hear/think in the target language. (Paula)

Five teachers talked of the effect on their teaching of vocabulary of their own language learning experience. Colin claimed that his entire approach to teaching vocabulary was based on how he had learned it in his three languages, and the effective practices of his past teachers. The four other teachers all referred to the tendency of teachers to overload their students with new lexis, and how their own language learning experience was a salutary reminder to limit new items and to give plenty of repetition and practice.

Yes, definitely. I would attend a lesson in Italian, get a whole list of vocabulary, things like clothing, vegetables and things, go out into the shops and think “What were those words? i just cannot remember them”. (Beatrice)
I was surprised, I was shocked how long it took for me to get that first breakthrough into the language. With the students we would never spend three-quarters of an hour on one sentence, but you come back to it [the learning experience] a lot and I think they just need [it]. I’ve been aware of how much repetition and things they need to get used to things, and especially that beginning bit when you’re really getting used to it. (Val)

Val was also surprised at how she focussed on small things which distracted her as a learner in a recent course in French. She found the teacher’s ineffective use of the whiteboard and her small handwriting to be annoying, and she resolved to pay more attention to her own whiteboard use.

There are nineteen references in this section to teachers applying insights gained from their own experience as a student. With experience gained before their teaching career, this sometimes makes them determined to avoid or adopt practices they found detrimental or helpful. Learning experiences they have undertaken during their teaching career sometimes confirm their own practices and add vigour to their previously-held beliefs, or they lead them to question their beliefs and re-think their teaching practice. Both bilingual and monolingual teachers gave evidence of modifying their practice based on their own language learning experience, but the more detailed descriptions of technique were given by the bilinguals. The accounts of the monolinguals tended to be concentrated on issues of being patient and giving students plenty of time, and those which did focus on specific techniques were largely about the need for a great deal of repetition of new vocabulary, and not overloading students with too much new vocabulary. These monolingual references are consistent with the low-level and unsuccessful language learning they had experienced. The data here does seem to support the proposition that insights from experience inform professional knowledge and beliefs, sometimes reinforcing them and sometimes challenging them.

7.3.4 Knowledge of issues relating to teaching one’s own first language

Twenty-eight of the thirty-one teachers interviewed are native speakers of English, and while there is no definitive data to tell us, most would agree that the ESL profession in Australia is largely made up of native speaker teachers. Salient issues about native and non-native speaker teachers were discussed in Chapter 3.1. The key point here is that native-English speaker teachers are teaching their own first language and this section reports on the issues raised in relation to this.
Several teachers, five bilingual and one monolingual, expressed an awareness of the pitfalls of teaching the language of which one is a native speaker. The first of these is that the teacher can assume too much knowledge on the part of the students, and underestimate the difficulty that a particular structure or word can cause students, as Anna and Felicity express it:

… another thing that I think is a bit difficult is that in a sense if it’s your own language you know too much, and sometimes you can make things too complicated for them. …. So sometimes I think if it’s your own language you can give them too many options … I don’t know, for a student it’s often easier to have one or two things, you know you can say it this way, or this way. (Anna)

… it’s easy to get complacent as a language teacher …. if you’re a native speaker, it’s so known to you. (Felicity)

Two of the bilinguals who were non-native speakers indicated that their non-native status gave them some advantages in teaching ESL. Lidia claimed that she has a better grasp of grammar and awareness of English idioms than her native-speaking colleagues because she had learned English herself. Rebecca, who teaches a bilingual class, referred to how she can explain something much more quickly, and beginning students can ask questions, unlike in an English-only class.

Another four comments pointed to the added pitfalls which exist for a native speaker teacher who is monolingual. They suggested that the danger of assuming too much is greater, and that lack of language experience can restrict insights into students’ L1 and their interlanguage, as in Fiona’s and Elaine’s comments, and into the demands of language learning, as in Anna’s comment.

I’m aware of how you can speak a language without articles, I think … a person who’s monolingual doesn’t know how you can talk without ‘the’, and pronouns too. The Japanese hardly use their pronouns, they won’t say ‘he did it’ they’ll just say ‘did it’ … oh, no, they’d just say ‘did’ … so they come to English where you’ve got to use all these pronouns all the time. (Fiona)

[if students get word stress wrong] … it makes them unintelligible, and native speakers can’t accommodate a different stress pattern [Int: No, they can’t] not Australian native speakers anyway, because they’re monolingual. (Elaine)
... so yeah, it is because, because I have those languages, I think that I’ve learned … more kind of … I know what it’s like to learn a language. As a monolingual you might not be so sensitive to it because you’re speaking your mother tongue, it’s so kind of clear to you that this is how things are done, you don’t need an explanation [as] to … why do you say this in English. (Greta)

... it’s something you don’t really realise until you’ve actually tried to grapple with a foreign language and expressing yourself in it. I don’t think you fully realise the problems, because I’ve met other English teachers who don’t have any other foreign language and sometimes I think the demands they put on the students are enormous. They just don’t realise how difficult it is for them. (Anna)

Teachers here, then, have pointed to the fact that there are dangers, or pitfalls, arising from teaching one’s own first language which include an underestimation of difficulty for students and a tendency to offer students too many linguistic alternatives. Others maintain that these traps are even greater for native speaker teachers who are monolingual. All the comments here came from bilinguals, with the exception of Elaine, who was classified as the ‘least monolingual’ of the monolinguals. The comments are based on their own experiences of learning or teaching other languages, and on the resulting ability to think from the perspective of another language as medium. This is what Hawkins (1984) refers to as the ability to ‘get outside’ one’s own language and see it more objectively, both linguistically and methodologically.

7.3.5 Insights into the demands of varied language teaching contexts from their own experience as teachers

Here, as flagged earlier, I consider only experience as a language teacher, as opposed to earlier sections which considered experience as a language learner. Two of the non-native speaking circumstantial bilinguals had experience of teaching EFL in their home country. They made comparisons between teaching EFL to a linguistically homogenous group where they shared the students’ first language, and teaching ESL to linguistically heterogeneous groups. Both stressed that L1 can be used to explain more easily and quickly in the former context, and that knowledge of the students’ L1 helps to predict areas of difficulty with English.

A further six of the bilingual teachers had taught LOTE in Australia as well as ESL, and all six made reference to their LOTE teaching experience when talking about ESL. One feature mentioned by all six of them was the fact that ESL is taught in L2 (English), whereas the LOTEs are generally taught via the medium of L1 (English). In the first
model, the L2 is both the target of instruction and the medium, and in the second model the L2 is the target of instruction but not the medium. Simone, who had taught French and German, pointed out that this made it easier to explain grammatical items, but meant that students had less practice in the target language. Colin compared his teaching of grammar in his Japanese and ESL classes, stressing that because of the much lower exposure of the Japanese learners to the language, he tended to give rules much more readily. His ESL learners were in a better position to develop a sense of correct usage from hearing the language all around them, he maintained.

[I think that grammar is] … possibly less important for ESOL than it is for the teaching of LOTE. I mean when I teach a class Japanese here, they’re probably not going to have any exposure, much, other than when they come to my lesson. They’re not surrounded by it in the community, so they want rules, they want it [explained], they’re not just going to work out that “this sounds right” and “this sounds wrong”. They haven’t got time for that, they need somebody to cut right through all that and say “Well this is, this is the rule” and these are the exceptions and you may have go home and sit and rote-learn it. (Colin)

Responding to the question about the challenges of teaching English through English, Susan gave the opinion that having taught both through L1 and L2, she had found that students have to work harder when taught in L2. The effort to understand explanations and follow the class in L2 makes high demands on cognitive abilities. Anna made the point from the teacher’s perspective that it was much easier to explain meaning when she had recourse to the students’ first language, as in her teaching of French.

Bridget thought that her teaching of ESL was quite different to her teaching of French and Latin mainly due to the abundance of authentic materials with which to teach ESL. She claimed that it was easier to teach one’s native language, referring to the unsettling experience of having French native speakers in her French classes, making her feel insecure in her own grasp of the language. She also compared the rapid progress of most ESL students to the slow progress made by most LOTE school students, which she put down to differences in motivation and in hours of exposure.

Elide claimed that she drew on her LOTE teaching in teaching ESL “because that’s my background”, and talked of how it made her believe in the importance of repetition, correction, memorisation, and sheer application of effort in the learning of a second language. She implied that these notions were little stressed in the ESL world and she believes in them because she had seen them work in her teaching of Italian.
Colin said that his experience of teaching Japanese had taught him a lot about monitoring the complexity of his use of language, and this helped in his ESL teaching.

When I’m in class I’m very conscious of every single word that I say. And that comes from my LOTE teaching as well, you know, when I go into 4th year Japanese obviously I can say a whole lot of things in Japanese to them, that I can’t say to my second year class. I have to be thinking ahead “No, I can’t use that structure because they haven’t had it” or I can’t … but I can do this with them because they’ll understand that. So I’ve sort of learned to sort of monitor my language, y’know, so that comes from my foreign language teaching. (Colin)

Eight of the bilingual teachers, then, had experience of teaching language in different contexts to which they referred as a basis for comparison when talking about their teaching of ESL. Two of these, both non-native speakers, had taught EFL in countries where they shared the students’ L1 and six had taught or were currently teaching LOTE in Australia. The main points of comparison they brought up were: the availability of L1 as a resource for teaching; the difference in amount of exposure to the language which students have in each; ways of monitoring the teacher’s use of complex language, and different orientations towards teaching in LOTE contexts such as greater emphasis on grammar and memorisation of vocabulary. As would be expected, there were no monolingual contributions on this issue, as they are not in a position to teach a LOTE. The point to be made here is that by having experience of teaching language in different contexts, these teachers have another perspective from which to think about their approaches and practices in ESL. They have a broader basis upon which to make professional judgements, and are aware of alternative approaches from those prevalent in ESL.

7.4 Summary of how teachers’ language learning experience contributes to their knowledge and beliefs in ESL teaching

This chapter has considered how teachers’ language learning experience contributes to their knowledge and beliefs in ESL teaching. It has done so by considering both data where teachers express directly beliefs about the relationship of their second languages and their ESL teaching, and also data which demonstrates the possession of that knowledge gained from personal experience which is recognised as being part of the desirable knowledge base of ESL teachers.
Firstly general beliefs about the value of language learning for ESL teachers were examined. In response to a neutral question about the main formative life influences on their work, fourteen out of twenty-four teachers, including thirteen out of fifteen bilinguals, nominated language learning or cultural contact as their main influence. Ten teachers also commented spontaneously that language learning experience was important and valuable for ESL teachers, and gave reasons, discussed in Chapter 7.1.2.

The second main sub-topic examined was knowledge about language and language use derived from teachers’ own experience, and here it seemed apparent that bilingual teachers are readily able to compare the structure and use of LOTEs to those of English, and to use this knowledge to predict or sometimes account for student difficulties. The eight circumstantial bilinguals demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of language use as it pertains to familial bilingualism, in particular code-switching and the role played by language in the formation of identity and relationships with family members. Bilingual teachers also had knowledge about how to use a LOTE they knew in the multi-language ESL class, and a set of beliefs about when and whether it was appropriate.

The third main sub-topic examined in this chapter was knowledge about language learning and language teaching. Included here was bilingual teachers’ understanding of what language learners do, in terms of learning and communication strategies, to cope with language input and output. Also discussed was understanding of what it is like to be a language learner, including the difficulties and the threat to the ego. Bilingual teachers had a range of knowledge of different teaching approaches and methods from the experience of being a student, including experience of the medium of instruction not being L1. There was ample evidence that they apply insights gained from their experience as learners, by implementing methods which they had found effective, and avoiding approaches they had personally disliked or which poor teachers had used. Finally there was a focus on experience gained as a teacher (rather than as a learner) in contexts where bilingualism was a necessary part of it. So bilingual teachers reflected on the pros and cons of teaching one’s own first language, from the perspective of also having taught a language which was their second. Those who were current or past LOTE teachers as well were able to compare their LOTE teaching approaches to those they used in ESL, and to comment on differing features of context, student motivation and contact hours.
By far the greatest number of the contributions in this chapter came from the twenty-two bilinguals in the study. However some of the monolinguals evidently had knowledge and sets of beliefs which came from their limited contact with language learning. For example, those who had studied French and Latin at school found the grammatical background useful in analysing English grammar and Latinate vocabulary. They naturally did not have any experience of the language use of bilinguals. Only one of the monolinguals contributed views on learning and communication strategies, but six of the monolinguals had informed views on affective aspects of language learning from their own experience, albeit all gained from low levels of study. They naturally did not have experience of teaching LOTEs or teaching English via the medium of another language. These findings, then, suggest that having another language, and having language learning experience are strong resources for teachers which appear to be readily available to them as they talk about their knowledge, beliefs and practices in ESL. There are sharp differences between monolinguals and bilinguals in areas of experience which are only possible for bilinguals, such as teaching in different language contexts and bilingual language use. In other areas monolinguals appear to have developed similar insights to the bilinguals but fewer in number, restricted to the experience they do have (for example as learners in beginners’ classes) and proportionate to the sophistication of their language learning. The data suggests that the insights which develop from language learning exist along a continuum, so that the monolinguals who only just fall short of the definition of ‘bilingual’ have richer insights than those at the ‘most monolingual’ end of the continuum.
Teachers’ beliefs about the role of students’ first language in learning ESL

….most of [the teacher trainees] felt that they could not have coped as well with the Thai lessons if English had not been used to explain features of the language. This contrasted with their own insistence that only English be used in their English classes. (Birch 1992:293)

8.1 Introduction

Teachers’ attitudes to the students’ first language(s) were considered worthy of exploration since there have historically been differing views on the role played by the first language (L1) in the development of the target language (L2) and hence differing classroom practices, as discussed in Chapter 3.3. All adult ESL learners are fluent speakers, and often writers, of an L1 and possibly of other languages. These languages, then, form part of the background knowledge, skills and expertise that they bring to the process of learning ESL. L1 can be viewed and treated in at least three ways in this context: positively, as a resource for learning L2; negatively, as a hindrance to learning, or it can be ignored as irrelevant. This chapter examines the positions taken by the teachers on the role of the first language in the ESL class, according to their self-reported attitudes and practices in relation to L1.

A direct question was asked during the interviews to explore this issue, and additional data emerged from incidental references made by teachers in answering other questions during the interview. The direct question was: “What is your approach to students using their first language (L1) in class?” The rationale for the question is the fact that, as described in Chapter 3.3, different methods tend to either support or proscribe students’ use of L1 in class. The researcher’s own experience as an ESL teacher also suggests that teachers themselves see L1 use as a contentious issue, and one which is commonly discussed among teachers themselves.

The focus here is on verbal use of L1 in the class, and the data is organized to show the three main attitudes expressed by teachers to verbal use of L1: favourably regarded
(Chapter 8.2), tolerated (Chapter 8.3) and unfavourably regarded (Chapter 8.4). Chapter 8.5 reports teacher actions or reactions as a response to such use. Chapter 8.6 reports and analyses some of the discourse used by teachers in discussing the use of L1, and there follows a summary of the findings of this chapter.

8.2 Students’ use of the first language is favourably regarded

8.2.1 Students’ use of the first language is favourably regarded without qualification

Five teachers, all bilingual, made a total of nine statements which were favourable towards L1 use between students. One was a high-level balanced bilingual, one had grown up with two languages, two were teachers of LOTE as well as ESL and one had a background of formal language study and of learning in-country. Of the nine statements, five were that L1 contributed to learning. One teacher maintained that L1 use was a stage in learning, and another that students only ever used L1 for constructive purposes to do with learning. Two teachers referred positively to students helping each other, teaching each other and translating for each other. One teacher, a very accomplished language learner himself, enthused that “you can’t forget the fact that you have this wonderful resource which is your first language” - perhaps the most unequivocal statement of the value of L1. This teacher did not elaborate here about why L1 is “a wonderful resource” except to say that one would always primarily think in one’s own first language, but in other parts of the interview he talked about his own experience drawing on English in learning another language, and in drawing on his L2 in learning L3. This would suggest that there is a comparative element in his own language learning, and, as the discussion in Chapter 6 argues, a teacher’s own experience is a significant contributor to the formation of his or her beliefs and practices.

Four of the comments explained social or emotional benefits for students in using L1 with each other. One was that students simply need a break from the rigours of speaking English, and two others were that speaking L1 creates social bonds between students and reduces their isolation. One teacher referred to students discussing a traumatic event in L1, such as the death of a family member, and concluded that such a thing had to be discussed, and it was unlikely it could be done in English. The same
teacher expressed delight that students could find reading material in their L1 in the National Library for free, and that they therefore did not have to lose touch with anything. These last four comments focus on the role of L1 outside the process of language learning. Five out of nine comments supporting L1 unequivocally then focus on the contribution of L1 to learning L2, and four comments relate to non-language learning benefits.

8.2.2 Students’ use of first language is favourably regarded under particular circumstances

Chapter 8.2.1 showed that only five teachers made comments which indicated unequivocal support for L1 use in class. A much larger number of teachers, twenty-six, referred to the use of L1 as being favourably regarded under particular circumstances. These circumstances have been arranged with those mentioned by most teachers first, and those mentioned by fewest teachers last. They are: for students to help each other; as a last resort when explaining in English has failed; to clarify meaning; in low level classes; and in break times.

8.2.2.1 Circumstances: for students to help each other

A common reason for supporting the use of L1 in class, mentioned by sixteen teachers, was for students to help each other. This, of course, is not exclusive of the clarifying of meaning discussed in a separate category below: in many cases students are helping each other to understand the meaning of linguistic items. Allocation of comments to one or other category depends on the emphasis given by the teachers: some comments are about the conveying of meaning between students, which is a linguistic and pedagogical purpose, and those comments reported here are about students helping each other, which is a social, humanistic purpose more to do with maintaining harmonious group dynamics. This appears to be something important to many teachers, as expressed in this comment:

I don’t mind people helping each other. I’m very much into looking on the classroom as a team effort. (Orla)

This helping frequently involved a stronger student helping a weaker one, mentioned in five cases, and was described as a student “translating” something, “ask[ing] the
question for her” “explain[ing] it to each other” ”telling her what to do in Persian”. The help, then, seems to involve both linguistic and procedural elements. The linguistic elements are translation of a word, into or out of L1, or the explanation of an English concept in L1, while the procedural elements are asking a question on behalf of another student, or relaying the teacher’s instructions for an activity.

The examples discussed so far relate to students helping each other spontaneously, taking the initiative themselves, and constituted fourteen of the comments by twelve teachers. Five teachers also talked of actively calling on students of the same language background to help each other. This seems to happen most often when the teacher has tried to explain an item in English, and only one student has not understood. Then the teacher will call on a specific student of the same language background to explain it in L1.

There are times when … I’m trying to explain a word and it’s obvious that one person, one Chinese person for instance, just hasn’t got what I’m … and I might say “Can someone just quickly tell her what that is?” (Colin)

In three cases there was a mitigation of this directive implying that this is a kind of ‘side’ activity, done so that the class can move on, which is consistent with a category discussed below (L1 as a last resort). This mitigation can be seen in the use of the highlighted words seen above: “just quickly tell her”. Other examples in the data were: “just quickly explaining..” and “Johnny, can you just tell Mira..”. The ‘just quickly’ and ‘just’ have the pragmatic effect of sidelining the use of L1, relegating it to a remedial strategy which must be performed quickly while the class waits for the real business in English to continue. So asking students to help each other in a specific case of non-comprehension appears to be a teaching strategy performed in parentheses rather than a mainstream part of the teacher’s repertoire.

8.2.2.2  Circumstances: as a last resort

There was a strong sense conveyed, by thirteen teachers, that L1 was to be used only when other strategies had failed. When the teacher’s explanation in English did not succeed in conveying meaning, or when students were unable to deduce meaning from context in a written text, it was felt that L1 could be used as a last resort, or to save ‘wasting’ time on lengthy English explanations. Teachers largely justified the decision
to allow use of L1 in terms of speed and efficiency, and in these cases L1 use was usually framed as “a shortcut” or “a quick translation”.

I see situations where it’s [L1 use between students] unavoidable but I don’t like it [for example] when some kid\textsuperscript{17} really can’t understand and wants a shortcut. I think that you can’t get everyone in the class asking you all the time but I don’t encourage it at all. (Connie)

In contrast to the shortcut provided by L1, explaining everything in English was sometimes felt to be too long-winded, hard work and not always successful. It involves confusion for the student and lengthy efforts by the teacher. Teachers referred to the time involved as “forever” (Anna), “very time-consuming” (Pamela), “until the cows come home” (Anna), and the effort for the student as being a “struggle around trying to work out the meaning” (Susan) and for the teacher to “keep slogging away” (Colin). The time and effort referred to here are used as justifications for resorting “quickly” to L1.

Of the teachers expressing this perspective, eleven were bilinguals, one of whom was a non-native speaker of English, and two were monolinguals.

One teacher who taught a class of Chinese learners bilingually explained that she still usually explained in English, but that she used Chinese either as a last resort, or sometimes as a double-check that students had in fact understood the English explanation.

Sometimes when they haven’t got a clue I just explain it in Chinese … the Chinese is just there as a sort of double checking that they’ve really got it. (Rebecca)

Thirteen teachers, then, were prepared to look favourably, or at least not unfavourably, on L1 use as a last resort when explanation or communication broke down. Some of the comments, while included in this section, contained a marked flavour of disapproval as Connie’s comment above shows: “… unavoidable but I don’t like it” and this phenomenon is discussed further below.

\textsuperscript{17}Connie, like the other teachers, was teaching in an adult context, but her students were aged mainly between 18 and 25 – hence the reference to ‘some kid’. 277
8.2.2.3  **Circumstances: to clarify meaning**

Nine teachers mentioned that they regarded use of L1 favourably when it was meaning-related. These teachers were happy to permit students to use L1 if they did not understand something, or if they wanted to check that they had understood correctly by asking another student. This could involve students translating a single word or a phrase, or explaining to another student what the teacher was saying. It could involve, too, a student translating a question into English for another student unable to frame the question him/herself. One teacher told of a class of older Greek women who were rarely happy with her English explanation until they had had a thorough discussion of it in Greek, and would then announce to her that they now understood. Typical comments were:

I think it’s OK to say things in your own language sometimes, if you don’t understand. (Greta)

… if you’re talking about what something means, that’s great. (Penny)

One teacher drew on students’ tendency to explain meaning to each other in L1 in a more deliberate teaching strategy. She explained how she would ask a class which was composed mainly of Chinese students to give the meaning in Chinese, and then say “Good, but I don’t know if you just gave her the right answer. Now can we have the explanation in English please?”. Here she consciously encourages students to use both English and Chinese to aid understanding. This category of clarifying meaning is closely linked to two other common reasons given for students to speak L1: to help each other and as a last resort.

8.2.2.4  **Circumstances: at low levels**

Five teachers commented that they permit use of L1 more at lower levels, and one of these added that elderly learners were more likely to want to use L1. The implication here was that L1 should be reduced or abandoned altogether once students have achieved an intermediate fluency in English.

8.2.2.5  **Circumstances: at break-time**

Three teachers gave break-time as a suitable occasion for students to speak their first language to each other. They acknowledged that some other teachers did not approve of this, but maintained that students needed to do it as a break from speaking English,
which they recognised as tiring, or to maintain relationships with each other, or because it was simply more natural for students to use their common first language together. These three teachers were all fluent speakers of second languages themselves, and had had experience of functioning in another language. This category, like that in 8.2.1, is not related to the role of L1 in language learning, but to the wider social and emotional well-being of students.

Chapter 8.2.2 has examined the views of teachers who report being favourably disposed to the use of L1 under particular circumstances. These included for students to help each other, thus contributing to the social dynamics of the class (sixteen teachers), as a last resort (thirteen teachers), to clarify meaning (nine teachers), at low levels (five teachers) and in break times (three teachers), constituting twenty-six out of thirty-one teachers. As already mentioned, the categories are not mutually exclusive, but data has been allocated to them according to the emphasis given by the teacher. A larger number of teachers (twenty-six) reported supporting the occasional use of L1 in specific circumstances (Chapter 8.2.2) than reported supporting it unequivocally, or without giving a qualification (five teachers, Chapter 8.2.1).

Examination of the data discussed above suggests that if first language IS seen as a resource in these instances, or by these teachers, then it is used in an ad hoc way which is not based on theoretical principles held by the teacher, nor planned and used consistently. Environmental constraints ensure firstly that use of L1 is restricted to those students who have at least one other speaker of their language in the class. Secondly it presumes that at least one student has understood and is in a position to explain, translate or mediate. If all speakers of a given L1 are confused, L1 is of little use, except possibly to ask: “What’s she talking about?” Thirdly, because the teacher cannot be a speaker of all the languages in the class, he or she is unable to judge the quality or accuracy of contributions in L1. Only one teacher, Fiona, apart from the teacher of the bilingual class, mentioned encouraging back-translation as a checking device to overcome this problem. As well as these constraints imposed by the multi-language nature of the class, the ways in which the teacher manages the use of L1 suggest that it is used somewhat randomly. In the case of students using L1 with each other, teachers seem to take a very ‘laissez-faire’ attitude to it, implying that if it happens, it happens and then it is quite handy.
… if they don’t understand something or whatever they’ll explain to each other in Chinese… (Simone)

… it’s quite handy at times. (Beatrice)

… it’s always so helpful when there’s someone [whose English is] slightly better. (Janice)

… one of them spins around and says something quickly to another… (Penny)

… it just sort of assists as a sideline. (Nick)

Of the twenty-six teachers supporting the occasional use of L1 for students to help each other, seven were monolingual and nineteen were bilingual as defined in Chapter 5.

Among the teachers quoted in this section, then, L1 use seems to be regarded as an occasionally permissible lapse from the main (English-only) method, but is neither consistently drawn upon nor its possibilities exploited in any systematic way. It occurs in parentheses, as an ‘aside’ to the class business. It may be initiated by a student or by the teacher but no cases were reported where clear guidelines existed, or where L1 use was a planned part of the lesson. Some teachers’ attitudes appeared to be contradictory, for example Connie’s comment that L1 is “unavoidable but I don’t like it”.

8.3 Students’ use of the first language is tolerated

Teachers’ views of L1 in class have been divided into those which favour L1 use (Chapter 8.2), those which tolerate its use (Chapter 8.3) and those which regard it unfavourably (Chapter 8.4). The views examined in this section have been labelled as ‘tolerating L1’ because they neither encourage nor discourage it. Eleven teachers made comments which fall into this category. None of these teachers also appear in the ‘unequivocally positive’ category, but two teachers also appeared in the ‘under particular circumstances’ category. The language used here is very much that of tolerance against teachers’ better judgement, of excusing an aberration or overlooking a bad habit. This idea is explored further and in more depth in looking at teachers’ discourse in Chapter 8.6. Two teachers described tolerating use of L1 at lower levels, and one based her decision whether to allow it on whether other students objected. The same teacher (Susan) confessed to feeling “ambivalent” about its use. Ambivalence was also expressed by the teacher who said
I don’t discourage it but I don’t encourage it either. (Tina)

Another teacher talked of new students, particularly refugees, being “fragile” and said that she would “let it [L1 use] ride for a few weeks in a new class” (Michelle), before, as she described elsewhere, cracking down on it. The difference between the opinions and practices in this section and those in the section on ‘particular circumstances’ is that the teachers talking here give the impression of permitting L1 under sufferance rather than taking the slightly more positive attitudes examined in the earlier section. The language used is that of constraint and control. The teacher appears as an authority figure who is for the moment forbearing to exercise her authority.

I (pause) excuse it. (Ofra)
I’ll allow it to happen. (Susan)
It’s got to be minimal. (Bridget)
I sort of tolerate it (laugh). (Anna)
I would let it ride. (Michelle)

Whereas some of these teachers appear to be applying their own preferences and judgement to the question of L1 use, there was also a recurrent theme among others which suggested that they would tolerate L1 use in the face of an unspoken notion that it is undesirable. Recalling that the question was framed as neutrally as possible: “What is your approach to students using L1 in the classroom?”, eight of the answers suggest a certain defensiveness, as if other members of the profession are hovering on the sidelines in a disapproving manner. This suggests that the prevailing view in the profession as a whole is that L1 use should be minimised, consistent with claims made by Harbord (1992) and Medgyes (1994). Typical answers, where the language suggesting defensiveness is in bold type were:

I don’t come down heavily on students who do use their own language in the class. (Susan)
… they can help each other a little bit [in L1]. What’s wrong with that? (Orla)

Some teachers, then, ‘tolerate’ students’ use of L1 against their better judgement, giving the impression that it is a bad practice per se, but can be overlooked or ignored as long as it does not dominate proceedings. Other teachers suggest that they ‘tolerate’ L1 use not against their own better judgement, but against what is commonly thought to be good classroom practice. Hence their allowing of its use needs to be defended.
8.4 Students’ use of L1 is unfavourably regarded

Twenty-five teachers made comments indicating that student’s use of L1 is unfavourably regarded, and these ranged from expressing a mild disapproval to exasperation and even anger. (Teachers’ verbal reactions in class to L1 use are discussed in Chapter 8.5). Many of the reasons given had a pedagogical basis (Chapter 8.4.1), while others were based on other reasons (Chapter 8.4.2). A third group of comments show an unfavourable view of L1 without stating reasons (Chapter 8.4.3)

8.4.1 Use of L1 is unfavourably regarded for pedagogical reasons

Where reasons given for proscribing, or disapproving of, L1 use in the classroom appeared to have a pedagogical basis they have been included in this section. The majority of comments were related to the perceived desire to maximise the amount of English that students firstly speak themselves and secondly hear from the teacher and other students. Teachers expressed the view that the students were there “to do English” and they voiced concern about the relatively small number of hours per week to which students were “exposed to English”. Learning is thus seen to be at least partly a function of time spent listening to, and speaking, the target language. Others emphasised the effort involved in an English-only classroom, suggesting that learning comes from the need to use English to communicate and understand. A further recurrent theme was that of encouraging the students to “think in English” which, it was suggested, can only be achieved by maximising the amount of talk in English and minimising translation. Teachers appeared to see use of L1 as being synonymous with translation, and to see translation as undesirable, being the antithesis of the desired ‘thinking in English’ and slowing the student’s progress. These views are very much in line with the dominant discourse of the ESL teaching profession, as discussed by Phillipson (1992a, 1992b) and Auerbach (1993). In both theoretical terms and methodological terms, excluding the first language from the classroom is framed as an inevitable part of ensuring that students have enough input in English and practise it sufficiently. As will be shown in the following discussion of the data, L1 then is not always prohibited as a ‘bad thing’ in itself, but as taking up valuable time which would be better spent speaking, listening to and thinking in English.
8.4.1.1 To gain maximum exposure to English

Eight teachers stated that their desire to minimise students’ use of their first language in class comes from their belief that students needed to be surrounded by English as much as possible. Three stated that class time was the only time students spoke in English and therefore it was important to ensure that opportunity to speak English was safeguarded:

… but my rule is that they are not to speak first language from when they get off the train … they’re only getting 20 hours a week of practice in English … and I just don’t think they’re getting the exposure. (Elaine)

… do you know that more than 50% [of the students] hadn’t spoken one word of English in the two weeks of the [semester] break? (Ofra)

The last comment in particular suggests that some teachers ask students how much they use English outside class, and perhaps find that many of them are ‘shielded’ (King and Palser 1983) from the need to use English in their L1 community. Like the teachers above, Colin stressed that it was desirable that students speak English-only all day in the college:

… the ideal of course is that they speak English all day long when they’re at TAFE …. (Colin)

He went on, however, to say this was unrealistic, as it was too tiring and students were only human. His views, which included encouragement of occasional use of L1, were included in Chapter 8.2.1, but this quote is included here to show that he recognises the ideal of English-only at all times, even though he admits this ideal cannot be achieved. He thus acknowledges the dominant view while modifying it in his own practice.

Three other comments related to the need for students to hear English as much as possible. Again, despite the fact that they are living in an English-speaking society, there is an unspoken suggestion that students are not hearing enough English outside the class.

… the fact that they’ve at least got to listen to a teacher for an hour at a time means that they’re being exposed to more language. (Hilary)
These comments suggest a belief in the power of input in the target language to effect learning. This reminds us of Krashen and Terrell’s (1992) ‘Natural Approach’ but without one of its key components: Krashen’s insistence that people learn language through hearing *comprehensible* input. Perhaps teachers believe that the input they provide for students in class, through adjustment of their own language, and judicious selection of listening texts, *is* ‘comprehensible’ in Krashen’s terms and thus available for acquisition, but this issue was not mentioned — it was input in English *per se* which was the focus of these comments. Hence teachers seem to be equating L2 input with ‘comprehensible input’. In assuming also that any language heard outside the classroom is also comprehensible and therefore available for learning, there is an unspoken assumption that exposure to any English will result in learning.

The terms ‘immerse’ and ‘immersion’ were used several times by teachers, both as in “the immersion method” (Beatrice) and in a general sense that students benefit from being ‘immersed in the language’.

*It is very hard, to learn English through the medium of English, but I think that it has benefits, because it does immerse [students] in the language. (Nick)*

Talking about her ideal way of learning a second language, Beatrice maintained that “the immersion method would be far more productive”. She takes the watery metaphor further by maintaining that an English-only classroom is good because:

*I think you soak them, people, in the language much more. (Beatrice)*

These quotes suggest that the term ‘immersion’, meaning something like ‘completely surrounded by and enveloped in the target language with no intrusion of the first language’, have entered the ESL teacher’s vocabulary to the extent that it can be paraphrased by the verb ‘soak’ without any difference in meaning. The term has thus lost its specific meaning used in the literature on bilingual education. It is probable that most teachers are vaguely aware of its origins in Canadian research into the education of English-speaking children through the medium of French (Hamers and Blanc 2000). While there are several variants of this program, its success is fairly well known anecdotally in the language teaching professions. Cummins points out that the term has come to be used for a variety of types of instruction, and that misleadingly, even submersion programs have been referred to as ‘immersion’ (Cummins 1988).
Submersion is generally accepted as the education of a minority language child in the same classroom as native speakers of the target language, without support for the child’s first language (Hamers and Blanc, 2000:321).

There are two problems with this blurring of the meaning of the term. First, the teachers quoted here appear to be claiming the benefits of ‘immersion’ while not actually implementing it in accordance with the principles or design of the programs whose success has led to the popularisation of the term ‘immersion’. In discussing evaluations of bilingual programs, Cummins (1988) points out that key features of the Canadian French immersion programs often quoted as successful are: bilingual teachers, modified input in L2, and a strong focus on the development of L1 literacy skills. In other words, immersion has a component of L1 education and certainly has a principled approach to the place of L1 within the L2 instructional environment. In contrast, the teachers reported here appear to see a limited place for L1 in the class and do not articulate a principled approach to its role within the curriculum. ‘Immersion’ has become equated with the ‘direct method’ practice of minimising L1 use in the classroom.

The second problem is that immersion is not an appropriate model for adult ESL as it is currently constructed. As Auerbach (1995:25) points out, immersion research has been carried out on SLA in children, and results suggest that immersion instruction is effective only for learners from dominant language groups who enjoy support for and approval of their L1 at home and in society. It also involves teaching the general curriculum through the target language, rather than the language-focused instruction we find in most adult ESL classes.

In short, the success of a bilingual education program used with children in a society with two official languages (Canada), implemented across an entire school curriculum in a very different political context to that of Australia, is being invoked to justify the exclusive use of English in language classes for adults. The term ‘immersion’ has been colonised and put to work to support a practice which it is not designed to deal with and which immersion practitioners would not necessarily advocate.
8.4.1.2 The effort to understand and communicate

A second major pedagogical rationale given for minimising students’ use of the first language was that it forced students to make efforts to understand the teacher and each other, and to convey their own messages. This too is an important precept of the communicative approach: that people learn language by having to use it to communicate. Swain terms such conversation in which meaning is negotiated ‘comprehensible output’ and argues that it “….is a necessary mechanism of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input” (Swain 1985:252). One teacher likened the classroom to ‘real life’ outside in this way:

… you have to rely on that [English] and it makes it a real-life scenario to understand what the teacher is trying to say, as well as learning what she’s trying to teach me … you know, you have to do a fair amount of guessing, don’t you when you’re out on the street. (Ofra)

Other comments also focussed on the benefits of making an effort to understand:

… it’s good, that they learn firstly classroom English, but have to learn to apply classroom instructions and things in English. (Sharon)

One teacher talked of an English-only approach making students:

“… more prepared to take risks in the classroom situation and so just giving them as much opportunity to do that [as possible] (Hilary)

Hilary recalls, in her reference to ‘risk-taking’ one of the characteristics of “the good language learner”, which is to experiment with grammar and words (Rubin and Thompson 1982). The same teacher favoured the inductive process which students had to engage in:

… it’s really helpful for the majority of learners to extract the meaning themselves, instead of just be told it. You work out a pattern for yourself, and then you test the pattern and it turns out to be right or wrong. (Hilary)

Another teacher, who had formerly been a teacher of LOTE, revealed an interesting perspective on the use of the first language in the class, maintaining that
[if you teach via L1] you approach it always as a grammatical challenge, not as a communicative challenge. (Penny)

The noteworthy point about this view is that it equates ‘communicative challenge’ with an English-only classroom, and ‘grammatical challenge’ with a classroom where both L1 and English are used. There is no inevitable link in practice between these pairs, since it is possible to teach in a very structural way in English-only, and it is possible to teach communicatively using two languages. However they are linked in terms of historical language teaching methods and thus the experience of this particular teacher. In the days when she was teaching LOTE in school, the grammar-translation method was the order of the day, and the association of L1-based teaching with this now-discredited method was described in Chapter 3.3. The communicative approach of the early 1980s onwards has come to be strongly associated with the English-medium ESL class, and some would maintain that LOTE teaching has been slow to adopt communicative methods.

The teachers quoted here, then, perceive it as important that students be placed in the position of having to use English for communication in class, since using the language for real purposes will assist their learning. This reflects a major precept of the communicative approach (Burns et al. 1996, Littlewood 1984), but does not take account of the fact that it is possible to teach ‘communicatively’ and have students perform real communicative tasks in the target language while still admitting a role for L1 (Atkinson 1987, Chau 1993, Rinvolucri 2001).

One view thus appears to equate exclusion or minimisation of L1 with the achievement of desirable communicative ends, and the admission of a role for L1 as being inconsistent with a communicative approach. We saw above that some teachers claim the benefits of ‘immersion’ for an L2-only approach which is not the same as immersion. So, too, by associating L1 use with a non-communicative (and sometimes with the outdated and disapproved-of grammar-translation) approach, it is possible to set up a rationale for the exclusion of L1, albeit on false premises.
8.4.1.3 Thinking in English – avoiding translation

Thirteen comments were made by eight teachers about the importance of students thinking in English. It was not stated why this aim was desirable, but the route to attain it was clearly articulated as using only English:

Well I try and encourage them to use English as much as possible. If they’re using English they’re thinking in English. (Anna)

One dissenter, who does believe in the judicious use of L1, recognised the existence of the argument that using only L2, while frustrating, is ultimately more desirable:

… it’s better to teach in the (target) language because that forces people to think in that language, but it does frustrate a lot of people. (Anna)

Ten other comments pertained to the belief that the desired aim of thinking in English would be compromised by translation, either mental, verbal or in writing. In the contexts in which it was discussed, L1 use appeared to be automatically equated with translation, as is clearly stated by this teacher:

… when they do use it [L1] of course it means that they are translating. (Bridget)

She clearly sees that translation is a problem in and of itself and that her disapproval needs no explanation or justification. Translation is seen by others as “wasting time”, “slowing students down” and something that will eventually be abandoned by a successful learner: “in the end they won’t translate either” (Pamela).

While most of the teachers simply took it as understood that translation is bad, a well-argued case against translation was given by one teacher (Hilary), who maintained that the act of conveying meaning in English through the highlighting of contextual factors encouraged students to view meaning as subtle, shaded and heavily context-related, rather than as being a matter of finding a simple equivalence in the other language. (Hilary was categorised as a ‘monolingual’, but as a former teacher of Latin, was well-acquainted with some forms of translation.) Nunan (1995a:127), however, gives the opposite view: that a bilingual dictionary definition is more likely to guide student to the ‘core’ meaning of a word: a contextual use may be idiosyncratic or peripheral. Another concern of teachers was that L1 use affected the student’s pronunciation in
subsequent English utterances. Three teachers mentioned the fact that when students helped each other in L1 the teacher had no means of knowing if the translation or explanation was accurate. This is a justifiable concern, for most teachers do not want their students to misunderstand or only partially understand. However, even this concern about accuracy is shown to be secondary to the ideal of using only English in the mind of one teacher:

[language learning] should come from listening and communicating and understanding [in English], trying to … even if they’ve got it wrong. (Ofra, emphasis added)

Eight teachers, then, see as important aims for their students the ability to think only in English, and the avoidance of translation into or from L1. Translation is seen as a hindrance to learning *per se*, or because it wastes time which could more usefully be spent thinking or communicating in English. An extreme view, expressed by Ofra, above, is that it is better to misunderstand than to translate.

**8.4.1.4 English-only makes for faster learning, and better-quality learning**

The three reasons for disapproving of L1 use so far discussed relate to the *means* of achieving proficiency in English. A further grouping suggests that the *results* of an insistence on English-only are of two kinds: that students will learn faster and their learning will be of a higher quality. No evidence was given for either of these assertions, but it is unlikely that it would be given in an interview of the type conducted. It can be assumed, though, that teachers have experienced students moving up through classes more quickly, or achieving good test results, and deduced that the faster students are also the ones who resist using their L1. Five teachers asserted that an English-only policy means that students learn more quickly. More quickly than what was not made clear, and in fact it would be very difficult to investigate empirically a statement such as:

I have found that when students are in a class and no-one speaks their language they learn English faster. (Ofra)

Presumably she means faster than other students who do have, and use, a common first language. The difference, though, could be due to any number of variables and not just avoiding the use of L1. It does, however, seem to be a truism to several teachers.
Evidence for improved quality of learning is also difficult to imagine: teachers referred to “a better quality of learning”, “the result is more effective” or “far more productive”. Five teachers, then, asserted that the avoidance of L1 in the classroom would improve the speed and quality of the learning of English, but did not provide any evidence or argument to support this contention.

8.4.1.5 Class management
Comments by six teachers characterised L1 use by students as undermining effective management of the class by the teacher. One comment was that while students were talking to each other in L1, they were missing out on what was going on in the class. This of course would be the case, as one teacher points out, whether they were speaking L1 or English – the point is that they are not following what the teacher is doing, or what the students are supposed to be doing. Thus there is a risk that the issue of ‘speaking L1’ becomes conflated with the issue of not being ‘on task’.

I have to watch that group and tell them not to [speak L1] … when they’re supposed to be practising the language. (Fiona)

Three teachers expressed their unease when they did not know what students were saying, referring to: “not knowing what is going on” and to this being a source of discomfort to them.

I don’t like it [L1 use] because I don’t know what’s being said, so I don’t know if it’s because they don’t understand what’s going on, or whether it’s some sort of private conversation. I guess it’s just not knowing. (Connie)

... there’s something happening that I really don’t know about too much. (Pamela)

Four of the teachers disliked students asking each other in L1 because they felt it was the teacher’s job to explain and help:

… it’s the talking first of all that irritates me, and then the business of: “Look, ask me!” I’ll say “ask me, it’s my job, I’m a teacher”, they’ll say “I don’t like to ask”, I say “ask me! 5 times, 10 times, it doesn’t matter, it’s my job! you know, like I’m here to teach, ask me!” (Frances) (emphasis in the original)

In contrast, another teacher seemed to be an exception who was unthreatened by it:
I just wait for a few seconds while they do a little discussion about what it might possibly mean, and then we just power on. (Val)

The evidence here suggests that some teachers wish to be in control of all that goes on in the classroom, and feel that they are not in a position to be in control when any activity in L1 takes place. Teachers reported disliking the fact that students miss what is going on in the class, presumably meaning teacher-directed activity. They dislike not understanding what students are saying in L1 and not knowing whether the exchange is learning-related or social in nature. This kind of classroom activity, then, appears inappropriate to the teacher as it is unavailable to him or her for comment, moderation, approval or disapproval. We shall see in the next section how this issue of some teachers wishing to be in control of classroom interaction links up with ways in which L1 is disapproved of for broader social reasons.

8.4.2 Students’ use of L1 is unfavourably regarded for other reasons

The reasons given for disapproving of L1 use which did not have a pedagogical basis tended to invoke questions of socially appropriate behaviour, demonstrated in a classroom setting through courteous and industrious conduct.

Six teachers thought of L1 use by a few students as “rude” and “not nice for the other students” because it excludes others: “the other students can’t understand them”; “it does cut out the other students”.

I mean that’s exclusive and I think it’s rude … you need to talk a language that everyone can understand. I don’t have any sort of fundamental opposition [to L1 use], it’s more in terms of what’s polite and fair and reasonable and considerate of others. (Frances)

Two teachers referred to students themselves becoming resentful if others spoke L1. One teacher was adamant that she felt it was her responsibility to train students out of using L1 in class because of the likely reaction of other teachers when students moved out of the ESL department into ‘mainstream’ TAFE courses. She pointed out that there was already enough negative feeling about NESB students in TAFE colleges, and their speaking L1 was likely to invite further dislike and prejudice.
I know that it’s going to get up the nose of the next teacher … when they’re studying computing or whatever, if they’re sitting away and mumbling in some foreign language up in the corner, the teacher’s… going to have a negative feeling about them. It can be rude to other people in the class, it can be rude to me and it’s going to be really counter-productive in the future. (Connie)

In addition to being rude, exclusive, inconsiderate of others and counter-productive to the students’ own future goals, the use of L1 was seen by three other teachers as an indication of laziness. One made the point that sometimes students used L1 “because they’re lazy and it’s a crutch” (Michelle) and another that students sometimes said things in L1 which they were quite capable of saying in English.

There are several points to be made about the views expressed here. First is that speaking another language, even in a ‘language’ classroom, is seen as something that can be rude to others who are not being addressed. This perception is usually framed as originating from the exchange being “exclusive”, that is, not being accessible to all in the room: teacher and students of other language backgrounds. Yet it is rare in any form of discourse, other than in teacher-fronted teaching or in public speaking, for all utterances to be available to all within earshot. Even though a classroom of students has an identity and a coherence as a group, it would be bizarre if every utterance was both audible and understandable to every individual in the class even in English. For example, a teacher might make a quiet comment to a student about his or her written work which is so context-dependent that it would make no sense to others even if they could hear it. Another point is that the teachers made no objection about students asking each other in English about social issues such as weekend activities or families. (One exception is Frances, who expressed dislike of students talking per se when she was teaching, regardless of language). Neither did they appear to have any objection to students’ asking each other about lesson-related matters in English, even though these exchanges would likely be voiced quietly and privately. In neither of these cases, then, would the exchanges be truly available to all members of the class. Perhaps the point is that, spoken in English, they would be potentially available even if not actually audible or comprehensible to all.

The comments reported here relate not to learning-related issues, which are examined in Chapter 8.4.1, but to social norms and approbation. The references to rudeness and lack of consideration demonstrated by speaking L1 echo unpleasantly reports of immigrant speakers being castigated for the same ‘rudeness’ on public transport in
earlier decades for speaking their own language (Ozolins 1993), even though in Australian society private conversations are not supposed to be the business of anyone over hearing them. One teacher talked at length about this attitude still being in existence in Australian society at large: she told several anecdotes about monolingual Australian speakers harbouring a suspicion that people speaking another language might be talking about them (Fiona). Another teacher, Ofra, who grew up in a Polish-speaking family, had personal experience of being abused for speaking Polish in public.

One comment with a non-pedagogical basis which is worthy of examining was that:

[students should avoid speaking L1 because] they need that feeling of being “Australi an” as such. (Elide)

This comment was spoken with a deliberately over-pronounced drawl and elongated /ei/ diph thong to give the effect of a ‘broad Australian’ accent (Bernard 1985). The teacher seems to be suggesting that by speaking only English and avoiding the first language, ‘Australianness’ will be experienced by the students. It is impossible to state what ‘Australianness’ might mean in this context, other than to say that speaking only English must be one of its features. This is an odd thing to say in a professional and educational context which, at least institutionally, insists on the valuing of ethnic and linguistic diversity.

8.4.3 Students’ use of L1 is unfavourably regarded for unstated reasons

Comments from twelve teachers referred to preventing students from speaking L1 without giving a reason for doing so. Some of these teachers gave reasons for banning L1 in other parts of the interview, but this section reports comments which were given without immediately articulating a rationale. Typical comments in this category are:

Well, I try and stop them as quickly as I can … in this class particularly it’s annoying because there’s quite a few Chinese, and they… they ‘yip yip yip yip’ at any time whatever they want but, yeah, so I really try to stop them. (Simone)

… [I try] not to allow students who speak the same language to help each other. Unfortunately it does happen. (Beatrice)
… that’s the really good thing about [distance teaching via] telephoning: they can’t speak their first language, because face-to-face they’re still muttering to themselves. (Janice)

Close to half the teachers, then, (twelve) appeared to feel comfortable talking about banning the use of L1 without feeling the need to justify it. This would suggest that it is very much an accepted part of ESL teaching practice.

8.5 Teacher actions or reactions to use of first language

Previous sections have focussed on teachers’ reported views of the verbal use of L1 in class. Chapter 8.5 is concerned with how the teachers reported that they responded to either type of use, and with self-reported practice. Since some of the strongest reactions were made in response to L1 dictionary use, these are included here as well as reactions to verbal use of L1. Most of the responses which teachers say they make are of a verbal kind, but some responses are of a physical nature, such as closing dictionaries or changing students’ seating pattern. These responses are examined to see whether they illuminate further the teachers’ attitudes to the use of L1 in the process of learning L2. Since one of the problems with self-reported data is that respondents may say they hold certain views which they feel are approved of rather than those they actually hold (Woods 1996), it is useful to examine spontaneous descriptions of actions based on those views. While these are still self-reported, such answers may be more representative of actual views held since they are initiated by the teachers themselves rather than being in answer to specific questions.

Eleven teachers mentioned specific courses of action when students spoke their first language or used L1 dictionaries. The most common was to joke about it. This kind of joking appears to be very much joking with a purpose. As one teacher (Michelle) put it: “you were sort of jokingly being the bossy schoolteacher”. She was somewhat troubled by this:

I always worried that sometimes in the style of humour I used it was like … a little bit like a schoolma’am. (Michelle)

She feels perhaps that this kind of discipline is inappropriate to adult classes, and that humour softens or defuses the serious message which is ‘don’t speak L1’. Another teacher (Elaine) referred to this dual role of humour, saying that she leans out of the
window when students are coming to class and chastises them if they are not speaking English:

I do it like a joke. I do it with a laugh, but my real meaning is serious. (Elaine)

Another, inexperienced, teacher had picked up a device from a more experienced colleague:

… when it (L1 use) gets too much, she’ll just go “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi Oi Oi!”. (Kim)

Here Kim is referring to the sporting supporters’ chant which became popular at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. One teacher took the notion of joking to the extent of trying to shame the students into speaking English:

I try to embarrass them, [saying] “this is the advanced class, English only please”. (Ofra)

Other comments concerned the feelings of the teacher when students spoke their first language or used bilingual dictionaries: they felt angry, cross, driven crazy and were moved to grumble or complain at the class:

Quite frankly I get really angry. (Ofra)
I grumble at them when they do it. (Connie)

Two teachers talked of other teachers’ reactions: in referring to mainstream TAFE teachers, one said:

[Speaking L1 is] one of the things that they get really cross about…. I know that it’s going to get up the nose of the next teacher. (Connie)

Another related an incident she heard of at a conference, and of which she disapproved strongly, in which:

… somebody had ripped a dictionary from the hand of a Chinese student and closed it, and the student was absolutely devastate. (Elide)

While not suggesting that her colleagues would do this, the same teacher confided that:
Some of the teachers here are very anti-bilingual dictionaries. (Elide)

Other reported reactions were verbal, as in the first four of the following examples; complex systems of rules, rewards and punishments, as in the fifth, and physically moving students, as in the last example:

No! Dictionaries away! (Pamela)
You can’t trick me, that is not English! (Connie)
I say “who’s got that dictionary?!” (said shrilly) (Frances)
Stop, no, when you come in here you speak English (Simone)
I have all sorts of rules and games and penalties to try and stop them … my rule is that they are not to speak first language, from when they get off the train (Elaine)
so if we don’t put some pressure on them and sit them somewhere else, they will keep doing it. (Lidia).

Two positive or supportive reactions were also mentioned: one teacher (mentioned earlier) just paused while students spoke L1 before carrying on:

I just wait for a few seconds while they do a little discussion about what it might possibly mean, and then we just power on (Val)

The other positive reference (from Colin, an elective bilingual with high-level proficiency in three LOTE) was to the futility and artifice of insisting that students speak English in the break, as some teachers do:

I think it’s stupid. If I walk past and say “English! Talk in English”, they’ll speak in English for two sentences, but I know as soon as I’ve walked away [they’ll stop], it’s artificial, you’re expecting too much. (Colin)

In summary, then, eleven teachers mentioned their own or others’ reactions to the use of L1 or bilingual dictionaries in class or in break time which were punitive or chiding. This is not a large number given the data set of 31 teachers, but there is also ample reference in the literature to the fact that punitive reactions to speaking L1 in the ESL field are common (Stanley 2002, Auerbach 1995).
8.6 Discourse about first language

In the course of analysing the content of teachers’ replies about their views of the place of first language in the ESL class, it became apparent that there were commonalities in the ways L1 was talked about that bore further exploration. The data was therefore examined to see how teachers described L1, or the act of speaking L1, or use of bilingual dictionaries. They have been grouped into those with negative or positive connotations. Neutral terms were also used, such as “their own language”, “their first language” or the name of the language “Vietnamese”, but were less prevalent than those which implied a definite affect. For the purposes of this thesis, it is positive and negative characterisations of L1 which are of most interest, and these are examined below.

8.6.1 Negative terms for the act of speaking another language in the ESL class

A number and variety of terms were used to refer to students’ languages which are derogatory or disrespectful. One teacher used the word ‘jabber’ five separate times during the interview. She used it to refer to her students’ use of L1 in class as well as to the scolding of her migrant parents by Anglo-Australians, and to Spanish speakers talking to her mistakenly thinking she is fluent in Spanish.

The Macquarie Dictionary (Butler 1985) has this entry on ‘jabber’
1. v.i. to utter rapidly, indistinctly, imperfectly or nonsensically; chatter
2. v.t. to utter (words) in a confused, indistinct fashion
3. n. rapid or nonsensical talk or utterance; gibberish (apparently imitative).

None of these meanings indicate anything positive about the meaning of ‘jabber’. It is understood to mean speaking nonsense indistinctly and at high speed. As a description of the L1 speech of adult students who are otherwise characterised by their teachers as responsible and worthy people, it is clearly inaccurate, pejorative and suggestive of ignorance and prejudice about other languages.

Six teachers characterised the speaking of L1 in negative ways which included onomatopoeic representations:
… they “yip yip yip yip”… (Simone)
… the writing from a Spanish student is just “bululululul” [indicating gibberish] like they speak. (Ofra)
… people “babababa” away in their own language. (Michelle)
… they “da da da da da da da da” in their own language! (Kim)

It is hard to know exactly what the reason is for teachers giving these onomatopoeic ways of referring to L1. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (Onions 1973) gives the word ‘barbarian’ as originating from a Greek word meaning “non-Greek, foreign, esp. with relation to speech”, and some think this word originated from imitating the strange speech sounds made by foreigners. Whether this is true or not, the act of referring to L1 by these sounds is neither respectful nor complimentary. It undermines the status of languages other than English by positioning them as incomprehensible, nonsensical, primitive and not part of a sophisticated linguistic reality.

Verbs used to refer to speaking L1 included “mutter away”, “jabber”, “jabber away” and “mumbling in some foreign language”. “Jabber” has been examined above. “Mutter” and “mumble” both contain the notion of low volume, but more than this they also suggest covertness and non-co-operation. The Macquarie Dictionary (Butler 1985) defines ‘mutter’ as: “to utter words indistinctly or in a low tone, often in talking to oneself or in making obscure complaints, threats etc” and ‘mumble’ as: “to speak indistinctly or unintelligibly, as with partly closed lips: mutter low, indistinct words”.

As with the example of ‘jabber’, ‘mutter’ and ‘mumble’ are essentially pejorative terms. Although low volume is a likely result of a classroom ban on L1, ‘whisper’ would be a less derogatory term. ‘Mutter’ and ‘mumble’ carry the additional connotations of unintelligibility, obscurity and the suggestion of ‘threats’. None of these terms, then, suggest anything positive, constructive or co-operative about speaking a first language.

A similar use of onomatopoeia was employed by three teachers who were vocal in their dislike of the use of electronic bilingual dictionaries:

… bips and squeaks and voices on these electronic things can drive you crazy. (Ofra)
… which you can hear them pinging away at. (Colin)
… especially [they’re] not allowed to use the ‘bip bip bip bip!’ (laugh) (Frances)
Here it is not the relationship of the dictionaries to any pedagogical or linguistic aim which is invoked, but an aspect of the technology involved, namely their audio facility and the electronic noises they make. This use of one characteristic of something to stand for the whole, or metonymy, can serve many purposes (Crystal 1997b), but here the effect is to trivialise the object. Attention is taken away from the fact that learner dictionaries are developed out of a great deal of research into their use in language learning (Tono 2001), and that students might be using them as a serious and earnest aid to their learning.

8.6.2 Negative ways of referring to L1

Eighteen teachers made a total of fifty-two comments which have been categorised as referring in negative ways to L1 use or bilingual dictionary use. In this section and the next, the terms in inverted commas are those used by the teachers themselves. Recourse to the first language is talked about by teachers as “a crutch”, “a habit” which is “resorted to” and has to be “broken”. Students using first language are characterised as “lazy”, “rude”, attempting to “trick” the teacher, and not “serious” about their learning. Students are seen as problems: “the worst”, “they’re bad” and in need of restraint, which may take the form of “policing”, not letting them “get away with it” “being firm” or the imposition of “boundaries” and even “penalties”. Students are stubborn in the face of their teachers’ efforts to get them to speak English: they come to “rely” on L1, are reluctant to “give it up” “resort to L1 very quickly” and “keep doing it”. They also contribute to prejudice against them, “courting … negative feelings” by speaking their own language.

There were at least two references to the belief that using L1 was a form of dependence, and that becoming an independent learner meant giving up reliance on L1, speaking English only and using a monolingual English dictionary. Even the teacher who teaches a bilingual class, using English and Chinese, sees reliance on L1 as being a form of dependence: in discussing how she would prefer to learn a new language, she would like to start with a bilingual teacher until she had learned the basics “and then I can gradually become more independent” (Rebecca). Although she is an enthusiastic proponent of bilingual teaching for beginners, she says “the downside is
dependency….it’s like a drug”. Students have to be “weaned off it gradually”. Nunan (1995a:127) also talks about class activities which are aimed at “weaning learners away from an over-reliance on the use of dictionaries”.

Other characterisations of L1 or bilingual dictionary use are as ‘cheating’ or ‘not quite playing the game’, irresponsible or at best, an understandable human weakness: “the ideal is to speak English all day but ... you know we’re all human”. (Colin) Using English-only is the brave, courageous option:

[Speaking English-only is like] having the courage to push their little boat off from shore. (Michelle)

It’s like hanging onto the rail of the ice-skating rink and they won’t be able to skate until they let go. (Elaine)

Ownership of a monolingual English/English dictionary is seen as the mark of a serious student:

… if students are serious students then they do go for a good quality English dictionary. (Connie)

There are powerful images conjured here by the terms with which teachers choose to talk about verbal use of L1 and dictionary use. Such uses are characterised in strongly negative ways; as a crutch or a habit, and one which is more reminiscent of childhood weakness and dependence than an adult self-reliance. The L1 user, too, is positioned by these comments as dependent, lacking in courage and seriousness, and sometimes as underhand and sneaky. Teacher response is reported in punitive terms, referring to the need to police L1 use and apply penalties for its over-use.

**8.6.3 Positive ways of referring to L1**

Of the positive references to the use of the first language, the strongest overall theme (fourteen comments by ten teachers) was that it was a comfort to students and makes for an easier, kinder learning experience. Use of L1 or bilingual dictionaries enabled students to be more relaxed and helped to build their confidence. It is something to “fall back on”, makes the class easier, and allows students to “relax”.
The images invoked are of gentleness, comfort, and an almost maternal solicitude. There are at least two references, one from the data and one from a noted ESL author (Nunan 1995a:127), as mentioned above, of the use of ‘weaning’ in relation to reducing reliance on L1. More than just being ‘mother tongue’ then, L1 is likened to ‘mother’s milk’ in at least two instances.

These and the following comments build a picture of L1 use that is a little like a child’s security blanket.

… gentle bilingual assistance can be very comforting at that sort of very early stage and very useful … it just gives them a little bit more confidence … they get a bit of comfort from that. (Orla)

I think it’s been good for him to have a lot of other Persian speakers … ‘cause he was like a little frightened rabbit at first and he’s really relaxed a lot more. (Fiona)

I like the idea of security in the classroom. I think it’s important to feel comfortable [and L1 use contributes to that]. (Elide)

They do not conjure strong, positive images of an intellectually active learner making conscious links between L1 and English. Instead we see a passive, threatened learner who needs to be indulged by a kind and forgiving teacher who occasionally allows recourse to the comforting and reassuring use of the first language. This impression is reinforced by the language which teachers use to describe how they give students “leeway” or they “excuse”, “tolerate”, “allow” or “forgive” L1 use. At no point are the students permitted to decide for themselves how much or how little L1 they wish to use: the terms are dictated by the teacher, whether this involves total proscription or tolerance within limits.

… in some cases I give a little bit of leeway. (Fiona)
… when it’s a beginner class I excuse it. (Ofra)
… if I don’t feel any objections from other students I’ll allow it to happen. (Susan)
… in the break I sort of tolerate it. (Anna)
… I’m more forgiving at an early level. (Ofra)

One teacher who was strongly supportive of students’ right to use L1 maintained that “I never try to stamp out their first language – ever” (Shanaz). The vigour with which she said this, and the choice of ‘stamp out’ – a violent metaphor – creates the impression
that there are some who would ‘stamp out’ L1 use. This, and the quotes in Chapter 8.3: ‘Use of L1 is tolerated’, where some teachers defend students’ use of L1 against invisible critics, or refer to other teachers who take a hard line on L1, all combine to suggest that there is a strong normative pressure to disapprove of L1 in the profession in general, apart from individual teachers’ proclivities.

The positive ways of referring to L1 and bilingual dictionary use, then, tended to reflect an empathic, pastoral view of the role of L1 rather than a view of it as positive in the language learning process. Teachers who support L1 use give reasons based on a humanistic view of the teacher’s role rather than a linguistic or pedagogic view of the role of L1 in second language learning.

8.7 Summary of teachers’ beliefs about the role of students’ first language in learning ESL

The data in Chapter 8 gives us quite a different picture of the teachers from that in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapters 6 and 7 there are clear differences between the bilinguals and monolinguals in terms of how they view language and language learning, and of the kind of resources from their own experience which they seem to bring to bear on the formation and expression of their knowledge and beliefs about language and language learning. In Chapter 8 there is very little difference between bilinguals and monolinguals’ beliefs about the role of students’ first language. Among those with favourable attitudes to L1, there are more bilinguals than monolinguals, but the numbers are so small that little importance can be attached to this. A much more striking feature of the data is that almost all the teachers expressed beliefs about the negative or destructive effect of L1, and these beliefs were expressed often in quite strong terms and employed pejorative terms.

The teachers discussed here appear to hold more unfavourable than favourable views of the place of L1 in the ESL class. Regarding verbal use of L1, five teachers made nine unequivocally favourable comments. Twenty-six teachers made fifty-six comments which favoured limited and controlled use of L1, and this is perhaps to be expected since a language classroom where L1 was used almost exclusively would probably result in little learning of L2, as past methods have shown (Howatt 1984). Extensive use of L1 is, however, unlikely in the multilingual classes under discussion here, and
the nature and quality of the views in this Chapter (8.2.2) do not support a conclusion that L1 use is viewed as favourable overall. Eleven teachers made fifteen comments which revealed a reluctant tolerance of L1 use, while twenty-five teachers made a total of ninety-eight comments construed as unfavourable to L1 use. Only five out of thirty-one teachers, then, made no unfavourable comments on verbal L1 use, or bilingual dictionary use (and two of these were not asked the relevant questions due to logistical problems with the interviews). It is not claimed that the teachers here are representative of all ESL teachers, nor that all views are shared by all teachers. However, insofar as it is possible to summarise the views of the teachers interviewed about the use of L1, I wish to argue that these views are problematic in a number of ways.

First, they are contrary to a sizeable body of literature which stresses the positive contribution of the first language in the learning of a second language (see, for instance, Corder 1992, Swan 1985). Second, none of the teachers articulated a systematic and principled approach in the class to the inclusion of L1 as called for by Collingham (1988) and Harbord (1992); rather, as discussed in Chapter 8.2, their approach tends to be uninformed by any consistent educational philosophy. Nor did any of the teachers mention a range of possibilities for incorporating L1 into meaningful communicative cross-lingual activities such as those presented by Atkinson (1993), Rinvolucri (2001) and Deller and Rinvolucri (2002). Third, the use of L1 is sometimes conflated with issues of class management and control as discussed in Chapter 8.4.1.5, and, further, constructed as being socially unacceptable. The act of speaking another language in class was referred to by some as rude, exclusive and sometimes ‘unAustralian’, while the L1 speaker was framed as unco-operative, lazy and sneaky. Such attitudes in society at large have been discussed by Ozolins (1993), Montaner (1992) and Clyne (1991a) as part of a general distrust of foreign languages in English-speaking societies where monolingualism is the norm.

However, the most important point to make about the teachers’ expressed views about the role of L1 is that they are overwhelmingly based on poorly articulated or even erroneous theoretical foundations. Thus an English-only classroom was frequently posited as the only way to achieve sufficient comprehensible input (Krashen 1982). This view recalls Phillipson’s (1992a) contention that one of the basic tenets of the ELT profession is that maximising exposure to English will improve learning, whereas there is no evidence to support this belief. This is perhaps another example of what
Fairclough (1989) calls a ‘naturalised discourse’. Providing an L2-only environment was also defended by calling it ‘immersion’ teaching and invoking the success of bilingual immersion programs (Cummins 1988) to justify it. Another rationale for minimising L1 in the ESL class was to force students to communicate and express meaning in the target language. This, which Swain (1985) terms ‘comprehensible output’ is a necessary part of acquisition, but does not preclude an approach which includes a place for L1. Also apparent was an equating of the communicative approach with English-only, and a corresponding equation of uncommunicative, grammar-based approaches with the use of L1 in class. As Atkinson (1987) and Chau (1993) point out this is a false and misleading equation. A further example of the exclusion or limitation of L1 being based on erroneous or incomplete theory is the views expressed in relation to translation. In several cases, the use of L1 was assumed unequivocally to be indicative of mental or verbal translation of English words. Chau’s (1991) research shows this to be only rarely the case, with learners using L1 for a range of cognitive, metacognitive and interpersonal purposes. Pedagogical translation (Zabalbeascoa 1997) as a valuable learning activity (Duff 1989) was not mentioned by any teachers in the interviews: translation appeared to be understood as being at the single word level, and counter-productive per se. (While translation as a teaching activity has more potential with monolingual (linguistically homogenous) rather than multilingual (linguistically diverse) classes, Rinvolucrì (2001) argues that it can be productively and communicatively used with both.)

The above summary is based on a content analysis of the teachers’ answers during the interviews. In order to provide a slightly different perspective, discourse analysis of the lexis and phrases used to discuss L1 use was undertaken as described in Chapter 8.6. Negative references to first language use were more common than positive ones (fifty-four comments by eighteen teachers compared with fourteen comments by ten teachers). L1 use was characterised as a crutch and a bad habit, and the L1 speaker as lacking in independence, courage and seriousness about learning. Among those who supported some use of L1, discourse was often marked by defensive expressions which suggest that permitting L1 use is contrary to prevailing wisdom and practice in the profession. Teacher response to L1 use, as discussed in Chapter 8.5, included joking, deliberately embarrassing a student, imposing penalties, anger, and shrill admonition more often seen among teachers of children. These responses were notable for constituting a departure from the teachers’ commonly espoused theories about the
importance of treating ESL learners with respect for their adult status, intellectual and social experience and their linguistic and cultural heritage.

The limitation or exclusion of L1 then seems to lie on an incomplete recognition of the role it may have to play, and of possibilities for its use. It also seems to be grounded in a shared view of a desired communicative approach which draws in a selective way on research in SLA and teaching methods and thus creates questionable assumptions about how English is best learned in adult ESL multilingual classes. This thesis argues that the discourse of ‘English-only’ is accepted most of the time because it suits the structure of the profession. As outlined in Chapter 2, direct method teaching of migrants in the post-war years meant that multilingual classes could be formed, which simplified the logistics of dealing with many different language groups and levels, and also meant that monolingual teachers could be employed. Over the last few decades, although methods and linguistic understanding have advanced considerably, there has been virtually no questioning of the ubiquity of the direct method, multilingual class fronted by a monolingual teacher. Other languages, both those of the teacher and those of the student, have become irrelevant. It has thus become an article of faith that teachers have to use English-only, and this appears to be justified within the profession by the weaving together of pieces of selected theory and various nostrums which are not always consistent. We have the paradox that English-only (or English almost-only) seems to be the dominant practice, but nowhere is it actually advocated or defended in the professional or theoretical literature in TESOL. This disjuncture between theory and practice, then, goes some way towards explaining the ambivalence, contradictions and strong emotions (Stanley 2002) by which the issue is characterised.

The status quo of English-only can then be seen as ideological (Fairclough 1989) rather than being an overt policy based on a consistent theory: it has become naturalised and thus needs little defence or justification. Marginalisation of the students’ languages, then, is another example of the way that languages other than English are ignored or undervalued in the ESL profession, and even the bilinguality of twenty-two of the teachers seems to have little effect on their beliefs about the role of the students’ L1.

In summary, the first language of the students in the adult ESL classes discussed here is largely characterised by the teachers as a negative influence on the learning of English. There appears to be a strong belief among the teachers in this study that eliminating the
first language, both in its verbal form and in the use of bilingual dictionaries, from the language learning process as far as possible is conducive to increasing the amount of English heard and spoken, and that this is unquestionably a good thing. Consistent with this belief are the disapproving and sometimes derogatory terms used to describe the use of L1. Where L1 is discussed in positive terms they tend to describe L1 users as passive, needy people who should be permitted use of L1 as a humanitarian kindness. The images conjured by the language used are those of comfort and reassurance. These do not construct the learner as a strong, independent adult with an important resource on which to base his or her learning of a second language. Thus even positive characterisations of L1 position the L1 speaker in a negative way.
Chapter 9

Conclusion

This thesis set out firstly to show that teachers’ second languages are paid little attention in the ESL profession, and secondly to investigate two research questions:

1. Does the language learning experience of teachers of ESL to adults contribute to their professional knowledge and beliefs?
2. If so, what kinds of language learning experience make a contribution and in what ways?

Chapter 2 described the current structure and the historical development of the Australian ESL profession. It was contended that ESL developed as a monolingual enterprise in the late 1940s because of three key factors:

- the arrival of displaced persons speaking many different languages after WWII, and a language teaching profession which could not provide bilingual instruction in so many languages;
- the behaviourist educational orientation of the time which saw L1 as a hindrance in second language learning; and
- the influence of the direct method which was then used in some LOTE teaching and became one of the bases for the development of the ‘Situational English’ method.

Australian public and educational policy in regard to languages and ESL was reviewed to show that attitudes to LOTE have always been ambivalent (Ozolins 1993, Lo Bianco 1987, Djité 1994, Smolicz 1994, 1995). Evidence from statements of teacher education requirements for entry, of course content and of desired competencies were reviewed in order to show that languages have not been considered necessary for ESL teachers (Hogan 1994, Derewianka and Hammond 1991).

Examination of competency statements from Australia and comparable countries, however, shows that they stipulate knowledge, skills and attributes to which it is
entirely feasible that second language proficiency and second language learning experience might make a substantial contribution.

Five broad areas of literature were critically reviewed in order to determine their bearing on the research questions. They were: the bilingualism literature, the literature claiming the intellectual and cultural benefits of LOTE learning, second language acquisition literature which looks at the role played by L1 in the learning of L2, critical perspectives on TESOL, and teacher cognition. In summarizing here the four chapters of Findings, selected parts of the literature will be called on to support the interpretation of the data. Chapter 4 described the qualitative, interpretive approach to the research, which acknowledged the complexity of the questions and permitted a research design using in-depth semi-structured interviews and the recording of language biographies. The elicitation of long stretches of spontaneous teacher talk about teaching and learning languages resulted in rich data which was then interrogated repeatedly looking for key themes.

Chapter 5 reported and analysed the teachers’ language biographies in order to be able to describe them, and to look at different language learning experiences as a prelude to considering their relationship to their knowledge and beliefs. Of the 31 teachers who participated in the study, all had had some language learning experience, and between them reported 114 instances of learning or having sustained contact with languages other than English, and, counting each language once only, a total of 31 languages. They had taken a variety of formal and informal paths to language learning, with varying degrees of success. The parameters on which the biographies were described were: self-reported proficiency in each language, how languages were learned, when they were learned, reasons why they were learned, affect towards languages, frequency of use of languages, and total number of languages with which they had had sustained contact. The overall finding was one of variety and richness in most of the language learning biographies. The distinctions which appeared to best sum up key differences in experience and to be useful in commenting on the findings from the interviews were as follows:

- circumstantial and elective bilinguals (Valdés and Figueroa 1994)
- native and non-native speakers of English
- early and late bilinguals
• bilinguals and monolinguals, established by the application of an arbitrary descriptive measure
• those with more language learning experience versus those with less, viewed on a continuum

These descriptors are of course not mutually exclusive, but overlap: three of the circumstantial bilinguals were non-native speakers, and all but one of the circumstantial bilinguals were early bilinguals. All the circumstantial bilinguals had also had elective bilingual experience, albeit in one case minimal. All the elective bilinguals were native speakers of English and all were late bilinguals. Although the terms ‘bilingual’ and ‘monolingual’ have been used throughout the thesis, it has also been acknowledged throughout that teacher bilinguality is most usefully seen as a continuum from ‘highly monolingual’ to ‘highly multilingual’. The constructs established in Chapter 5 were applied to the data considered in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

The three key points derived from the analysis of the teachers’ language biographies in Chapter 5 were that:

• all the teachers had undertaken language learning at some point, successful or unsuccessful;
• their language biographies were rich, varied, complex and overlapping; and
• between them they had learned, or had had substantial potential for learning, a large number of languages – twenty-nine modern and two classical languages.

Chapter 6 examined the first major theme to be extracted from the data, which was teachers’ beliefs about their own and their students’ second language learning. This data largely emerged from extended monologues and stories about teaching and learning rather than from the answers to direct questions. A major difference was noted here; between bilinguals, both circumstantial bilinguals and elective bilinguals, and monolinguals. Bilinguals’ talk represented second language learning as difficult but entirely possible and quite a normal part of life. Monolingual represented it as difficult, all but impossible and fraught with potential for loss of self-esteem. Bilinguals had realistic views of progress and attrition of languages, seeing it as a dynamic process (Herdina and Jessner 2002, Jessner 2003) in which they had succeeded in at least once, and though several had also had failures they did not see them as personally defining.
Monolinguals’ talk suggested pessimistic beliefs about their own ability, was self-deprecatory and often incorporated humour at their own expense.

Another aspect examined was teachers’ expressed beliefs about the difficulty or ease of second language learning, and specifically English learning, for students. Bilinguals had informed opinions based on their own language learning experience and they demonstrated this by spontaneously giving examples from languages they had learned. Monolinguals’ talk about the relative difficulty of English compared to other languages tended to be vague, inaccurate and hesitant. This finding bears out the literature examined in Chapter 3.2 which emphasises the awareness of contrastivity between languages as a key factor in the kind of language awareness needed by teachers (Hawkins 1984, 1999, James 1999, Leech 1994, Thornbury 1997, Wright and Bolitho 1993, 1997). This literature suggests that language awareness is enhanced by an ability to contrast and compare one’s own language to others, and the findings made it clear that the bilingual teachers’ other languages are available to them as the source of such contrast.

Chapter 7 explored direct links which were made between teacher language learning and expressed knowledge, beliefs and insights. Here again there were major differences between bilinguals and monolinguals, and also between circumstantial bilingual experience and elective bilingual experience, (which as pointed out above, often exist in same person). Asked to name their major formative influence(s) as ESL teachers, fifteen out of twenty-five teachers nominated linguistic or cultural learning. Fourteen out of sixteen bilinguals nominated one or both of these, and three out of nine monolinguals nominated language-related experience. In answer to direct questions about the value of L2 proficiency and language learning experience for teachers, the bilinguals expressed beliefs that their languages give them greater insight into how languages in general are structured, and gave them useful perspectives on English (Fitzgerald 1999, Skutnabb-Kangas 1981). Monolinguals largely expressed regret for not having second language proficiency. The rest of the data in Chapter 7 came from spontaneously-expressed opinions in talking about ESL teaching. Bilinguals demonstrated far greater insights about language in terms of phonology, structure, meaning and use than monolinguals and readily compared English with other languages. They did this only on the basis of languages they knew well. One interesting finding was that they made far more comparisons at the level of structure than at the level of phonology, meaning and use,
and none at all at the level of discourse or genre. One possible explanation for this is that the teachers have only ever studied such linguistic aspects through English, and sophisticated analysis of other languages is not readily available to them because the languages are invisible in their training and practice as ESL teachers.

The circumstantial bilinguals had particular insights into bilingual language use and bicultural experiences which included code-switching according to relationships, domains, topics, emotional import, and availability of lexis. They also demonstrated personal practical knowledge (Golombek 1998) of linguistic aspects of migration including the impact on families, the experience of encountering English for the first time at school, and of being ashamed of parents and of their L1. Several circumstantial bilinguals had experience of subtractive bilingualism whereby they either lost all or most of their L1, or struggled in their acquisition of academic English needed in the education system. They also had insights into aspects of language and identity deriving from their bilingual experience (Baker 2001, Edwards 2003, Lvovich 1997, Norton Peirce 1995, Norton 1997, Pavlenko 2001, Rampton 1990).

Several of the bilinguals (circumstantial bilinguals and elective bilinguals) had insights into LOTE as a pedagogical tool which could be used in both overt and tacit ways in a classroom where L1 is seen as a resource (Baynham 1983, Chau 1991, Corder 1992, Norton 1997, O’Grady and Kang 1985). One circumstantial bilingual taught a bilingual class, a situation which is not the focus of this study but one which is clearly rendered possible by a strong bilingual background.

Those bilinguals who were also non-native English speakers had additional insights into learning English as a second language. These included an in-depth understanding of the grammar and idiom from having learned it formally themselves, a suggestion that they were less likely to assume too much knowledge on students’ part and less likely to place unreasonable demands on students, and that they were better at anticipating student difficulties. These findings are in keeping with other research into the different attributes of native and non-native speaker teachers (Årva and Medgyes 2000, Medgyes 1994, Wright and Bolitho 1997).

The next key finding reported in Chapter 7 was insights teachers had about language learning and language teaching. Learning and communication strategies are central parts
of language learning, and training in their effective use now forms a well-accepted part of ESL teaching (Moir and Nation 2002, Oxford 1990, Postmus 1999, Wenden 1987). Teachers referred spontaneously to their own learning and communication strategies in their talk about their teaching and their students’ learning. It appeared to be only elective bilingual experience which gave rise to the kind of conscious reflection which makes it available for discussion. So if a teacher was a circumstantial bilingual, it was only their later elective bilingual experience which was drawn upon in this way.

Monolinguals also had some insights about their own learning and communication strategies, but these were confined to limited and largely unsuccessful strategies. Affective aspects of being a learner featured strongly, in particular with the non-native speaker teachers who made a practice of identifying themselves as learners to the students in convincing and inspiring ways. Other teachers referred to their ability to identify with the students in an empathic way as a result of their own language learning experience and to the frustration they had felt in formal learning contexts. Both learning strategies and affective aspects are the insights which are most commonly targeted by the ‘language learning experience’ (LLE) used as a teacher development tool which was discussed in Chapter 3.5.6 (Birch 1992, Lowe 1987, Fister-Stoga and Iwata 1992, Flowerdew 1998, Waters et al 1990, Weed 1993, Suarez 2002).

The next aspect of the findings of Chapter 7 was teachers’ insights into varied teaching approaches from the perspective of a student. These included experiences of being taught via L1 and via L2, of grammar-oriented versus communicative methods, and others such as the Silent Way, and of being taught by untrained native speakers. Knowledge of issues pertaining to teaching one’s own first language appeared to be more available to bilinguals than to monolinguals, and there were suggestions that monolingual native speakers can put heavy demands on students resulting from their own familiarity with English and lack of any comparable experience. There were many references made spontaneously by teachers to the ways in which they applied this experience in their own classes, such as how they modelled themselves on the personality traits or practices of good teachers they had had, and avoided the practices of the poor teachers. A common result of experience was the teachers’ resolve to slow down, to give students time, and to show more patience. They also referred to specific teaching techniques they consciously used or avoided as a result of their own positive or negative learning experiences, and this is consistent with the findings of Lortie (1975), Bailey et al. (1996), Golombek (1998), Eisenstein-EBsworth and Schweers (1997) and
with the contentions of Borg (2003). Again, it was elective bilinguals, and those with formal language learning experience who had these insights. Monolinguals had some insights, but since their experience was mostly unsuccessful and often traumatic, these largely centred on approaches to avoid and very few good models to emulate. The more recent the language learning experience, the more accessible it seemed to be, and reflection on the experience (Schön 1995, Freeman 2002, McKay 2002) is clearly crucial for it to become available as a resource in a teacher’s own practice.

Bilinguals with formal language learning experience also had insights arising from their experiences as teachers in contexts made possible by their bilingualism. Those who had taught LOTE demonstrated informed perspectives on how the availability of L1 as a teaching resource affects issues of differential exposure to L1 and L2, the teachers’ monitoring of his or her own language use, and different orientations to the teaching of grammar and of communicative skills. The non-native speakers who had taught English in their own country also had these insights.

The findings of Chapter 7 are central to the argument of the whole thesis, since they demonstrate that second language proficiency and second language learning experience are strong resources for teachers as represented in their talk about their knowledge, beliefs and insights into practice in ESL.

A different perspective on other languages in ESL is evident from the findings reported in Chapter 8, on teachers’ beliefs on the role of L1 in ESL teaching. This theme was not anticipated as being of any great moment, but stood out in a striking form in the data. The students’ L1 was in general not seen as having much place in the ESL class, and was positioned as being either a bad influence or permitted for pastoral reasons. The rationales given for the perspectives articulated by the teachers were based on insubstantial evidence and on long-standing practice which was seen to be self-evident. There was a contrast between what the majority of the teachers believed about the role of L1 and the literature on the subject which was reviewed in Chapter 3.3. This suggests that disapproval of L1 in the learning process has become a ‘naturalised discourse’ (Fairclough 1989). There was very little difference between the beliefs of the bilingual teachers and the monolinguals, and two of the circumstantial bilinguals with little formal language learning experience actually had the most negative ways of talking about their students’ L1. Chapter 3.4 pointed out that a monolingual approach has been
prevalent in ESL and the wider world of ELT for at least half a century (Phillipson 1992a, 1992b, 1997a, Pennycook 1994, Auerbach 1993, Baynham, 1983, Clyne 1991b, Christ 1997) and one explanation is that the teachers’ overall negative views of L1 arise from the very strong tradition established in the profession. This tradition of monolingual teaching appears to override even their own experience, in which teachers have been shown to prefer the use of their own L1 when they are learning (Birch 1992, Lowe 1987).

The conclusions of the study then are that although teachers’ languages are unrecognised in the adult ESL profession, they appear to be a dormant resource on which teachers draw in ways which are private, but accessible enough to be spontaneously called into play when discussing their teaching. As a resource they appear to give bilinguals insights into the nature of language as a resource, into English as compared with other languages, and into the nature of language learning which may well be of benefit to their learners. It is not claimed that bilinguals are per se better teachers than those without bilingual experience, but that language learning experience is a vital and varied resource which is available to teachers as part of their professional knowledge, beliefs and insights.

The implications of these findings are threefold: for teachers, for students and for the profession as a whole. Implications for teachers are that many of them are effectively silenced bilinguals, whose language skills go to waste. Chapter 5 showed that only six of the twenty-two bilingual teachers used their other language(s) daily and only three of these in their teaching. A further six used them ‘occasionally’ and ten not at all. Their other languages constitute an untapped potential which in most cases atrophies for lack of use. It is paradoxical that many of the teachers had taken up ESL teaching because of a professed love of language and languages, yet the profession itself contributes to their increasing dislocation from the object of their passion. Chapter 5.6 discussed data which suggested some of the bilinguals saw their love of languages as a personal indulgence, which they talked of with wistfulness and in one case a desire to reinvigorate them on retirement.

Given the substantial evidence that immigrant adult learners have a strong desire for the inclusion of L1 in the learning process, at least at low levels (Morrissey and Palser 1981, King and Palser 1983, Baumgart et al. 1983, DIEA 1982, Brindley 1984, Brennan
1986, Campbell 1986, O’Grady and Kang 1985, Chau 1993, Joyce 2001) this seems to be an extraordinary waste of valuable resources which take years to build up. It is commonly argued that bilingual teaching is almost impossible in Australian ESL because teachers’ languages do not match those of the learners. The problem with this proposition is that firstly there is no research to tell us which languages are spoken by teachers and secondly this study found that the number of languages spoken by the respondents was surprisingly large and varied. Chau (1991) had little difficulty in recruiting bilingual teacher trainees as assistants in 14 of the major language groups spoken by her students, and while these two studies are small and as yet uncorroborated, they suggest that the pool of linguistic skill may be larger than hitherto suspected.

Thirdly the above proposition is a self-fulfilling stance, since if teachers’ languages are not required, recognised and supported, they never will be able to act as a resource for bilingual teaching. However, even if a teacher’s languages are not those spoken by learners at any given time, this is still not a sufficient argument for disregarding them entirely. Current practice means that teachers themselves in most cases are closed off from the possibility of doing other kinds of language teaching: for example LOTE or bilingual teaching in Australia or L1-supported teaching overseas. Their professional options become limited to monolingual ESL teaching through the attrition of their languages. The richness of their language lives simply does not figure in public professional contexts, and it was noteworthy that several of the teachers professed to gain considerable enjoyment from the interviews because it gave them unprecedented permission to talk at length about their own language background. This in itself suggests it is personally important to them.

The implications of the lack of recognition of teachers’ languages for students is that they have no access to their L1 in ESL teaching. Learners’ first languages are subtly devalued, partly by being excluded and partly through the flourishing of negative beliefs about it as shown in Chapter 8. The inclusion of L1 has much to recommend it in terms of what it says to learners about the worth of their linguistic and cultural heritage and about the worth of their very selves, as discussed in Chapter 3.3 (Collingham 1988, Harbord 1992, Baynham 1983, Norton Peirce 1995, Auerbach 1993, Cook 2001). Learners are at present denied access to teachers’ language skills except in furtive and clandestine ways. Some teachers’ experience of linguistic aspects of migration, of code-switching within the family and of bringing up bilingual children, while clearly used by them in individual ways to build relationships with learners, could also be of wider
benefit to students if they were seen as a resource for teacher education and
development. The exclusion of L1 risks perpetuating disrespect for other languages and
feeds too easily into what some call the monolingual focus of Australian public life
(Clyne 1991c) and what Gogolin (1994) terms the ‘monolingual habitus’ of educational
policy. Lvovich, an accomplished and passionate language learner and multilingual,
reluctantly came to accept her own children growing up as monolinguals (Lvovich
1997) because of a similar societal disregard for languages in American public life, or
what Ruiz (1994) characterises as a ‘language as problem’ perspective. Avoidance of
such generational language shift is the ‘social equity’ argument for the learning and
maintenance of languages referred to in the National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco
1987), and in the statement by the Australian Alliance for Languages (2001) and
discussed in Chapter 2.

The implications of the findings for the profession as a whole are that it appears that
language resources are going to waste. Universal bilingual provision of ESL is probably
not feasible, but recognition of teachers’ language skills could lead to innovative and
creative approaches to including other languages in a variety of ways. Bilingual
teachers, both native and non-native speakers of English, clearly have attributes which
are of benefit to students and at present these are undervalued. Bilingual teachers are
even sometimes seen as a threat, as discussed in Chapter 3.1. Teacher education
programs for ESL teachers could make much greater use of teachers’ other languages
by incorporating provision for comparative language analysis, and by encouraging
systematic reflection on their own language learning (Bailey et al. 2001, McKay 2002).
A focus on English alone in teacher education courses contravenes one of the basic
principles of adult learning, which is to acknowledge and where possible incorporate
relevant aspects of the students’ prior learning (Knowles 1978, Boud and Griffin 1987,
Thorpe et al. 1993). In this tradition, the teachers’ second language(s) and the learner’s
first (and possibly other) language(s) would be regarded as part of the life experience
which adults bring to a new learning task. Ideally, teacher education courses should
encourage the integration of ‘experiential knowledge’ from language learning with
‘received knowledge’ from formal sources (Wallace 1991) to achieve the kind of
interaction between knowledge, beliefs and insights which was discussed in Chapter
3.5. The value of experiential knowledge is clearly recognised in teacher education, as
evidenced by the ‘language learning experience’ (LLE) literature discussed in Chapter
3.5, but there is silence on using and reflecting on its most obvious and rich incarnation:
the real-life language learning experience of teachers. It is therefore not only the linguistic resources themselves which are going to waste, but the enriched professional knowledge about language learning and language teaching which results from the existence of the linguistic resources. The data in this study has suggested that teachers personally do draw on these resources, but we can only speculate how much richer the benefits could be if teachers were supported and encouraged to draw on them in ways which enhance their professional knowledge.

The arguments in this thesis lead us to the proposition that the ESL profession sees itself as being concerned with teaching English rather than being concerned with teaching a second language, and the distinction has important implications for the recognition of teachers and indeed students’ other languages. The aim of second language learning is bilingualism (Sridhar 1994), and should be to develop multicompetent language users (Alptekin 2002, Cook 1999), and yet it is quite accepted that ESL teachers have no second language skills, or, if they have, that they are not encouraged to maintain them. Language teaching should be about helping people to be effective users of L2s, not to be native speakers (Cook 1999). Monolingual native speakers are scarcely ideal models of the kind of bilingual and multilingual language use which should be the aim for learners of English (Alptekin 2002, Kramsch 1993, Widdowson 1992, Cook 1999). Teachers’ expectations of their learners’ success is recognised as a contributing factor to the achieving of success (Cho 1990), and it is notable that the monolingual teachers in this study revealed pessimistic beliefs about their own and their learners’ potential for language learning.

In short, the findings of this thesis are that the greater and broader the experience of language learning and language use, the greater the potential it has to act as a resource in teaching ESL at linguistic, methodological and pastoral levels. That potential can only be fully realised through conscious critical reflection (Ramanathan 2002) and integration with received knowledge about English, about linguistics and about teaching. This study has been able to suggest that language learning experience is a key resource through examination of the biographies, knowledge and beliefs of a small number of teachers. More research into teachers’ language learning experience would enable its findings to be verified and extended. If indeed similar findings apply to other groups of teachers, it would provide additional impetus for us to examine further how
teachers’ second language learning experience contributes to the aims of the profession and to the interests of teachers and students.
APPENDIX A - NOTE

In the original print thesis, Appendix A (pages 320-322) consists of reproductions of two web pages at the NEAS Australia site:

Minimum qualifications for ELICOS teachers
http://www.neasaustralia.com/Pages/teacher_quals_elicos.html

and

Minimum qualifications for AMEP teachers
http://www.neasaustralia.com/Pages/teacher_quals_amep.htm
APPENDIX B

NB In sixteen out of thirty-one cases, the researcher was able to observe a class before the interview. Wherever possible, questions were tied to specific teaching incidents which had been observed, as a means of drawing out more general knowledge, beliefs and insights.

As explained in Chapter 4 (Method), answers were probed as information or beliefs were revealed, and there was no attempt to restrict teachers’ contributions to the questions here.

Interview Questions

STUDENTS
Tell me about the course you are teaching.
Tell me about the students in this class.
Tell me about a student who is having trouble, and about a student who is making good progress.

TEACHING SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE
What is your approach to:
- teaching grammar
- teaching vocabulary
- teaching pronunciation
- using metalanguage in teaching?

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
What is your approach to students using their first language in the classroom?
What do you think are the challenges of teaching English through English?
How does English differ from other languages? What special problems does it present to students?

TEACHER’S BACKGROUND
What aspects of your personal or professional background contribute most to your teaching of ESL?
Why and how did you become an ESOL teacher?
Have you worked or travelled in other countries? If so, what language or cultural experiences do you remember? How did you cope with the language?
If you were learning another language from scratch how would you like to do it?
Do you speak any other languages?
Have you studied or had contact with any other languages?
Tell me about how you learned it/Them
TEACHER’S LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY

First language acquired
Dominant language (one in which feels competent in widest range of domains)
For each other language:
Age acquired
Where acquired
How acquired
Level of proficiency
Level of activity
Level of personal attachment (affiliation)
Educational qualifications
Length and nature of teaching experience: ESL and other

FOR TEACHERS

Does your L2 experience contribute to your teaching in any way? If so, how?

FOR TEACHERS WITH SUBSTANTIAL L2 PROFICIENCY

Have you done any bilingual teaching (of LOTE or English)? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
Are there any benefits from your L2 experience for teaching multilingual classes even when you can’t teach bilingually?

END (FOR ALL TEACHERS)

What are the most important qualities for an ESL teacher?
**Appendix C – Summary of teachers’ language biographies**

Appendix C is a much-condensed version of the seven charts used to plot teachers’ language biographies as described in Chapters 4 and 5. This simpler chart is intended to assist the reader to quickly identify teachers’ language learning experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>ESL teaching experience</th>
<th>Classified as</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Dominant language</th>
<th>Other languages: NN-near-native, H–high M–medium L–low L C – contact but not learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greta</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Swedish/Finnish</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>German H – in family, at school &amp; university English NN – at school, university, as adult immigrant to Australia Italian L – at university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidia</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Spanish/English</td>
<td>English – at school, university, then as adult immigrant to Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>&gt; 20 years</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>Cantonese/English</td>
<td>English NN – at school, university, then as adult immigrant to Australia Mandarin L – at school, university German L – at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofra</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Polish M – within family Spanish L – evening class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanaz</td>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Urdu/English (1 parent 1 language)</td>
<td>Urdu/English</td>
<td>Panjabi NN – within family Arabic – from Koran (R/W only) Farsi/Hindu/Turkish/Bosnian – as related languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elide</td>
<td>&gt; 20 years including LOTE</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Italian NN – in family – now teaches at TAFE French H – school and uni. German H – school and university Spanish – adult education Mandarin – adult education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena</td>
<td>&gt; 20 years</td>
<td>Circumstantial bilingual</td>
<td>Austrian/German</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Austrian German M – from parents French H – school, university, living in France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>ESL teaching experience</td>
<td>Classified as</td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>Dominant language</td>
<td>Other languages: NN-near-native, H–high M–medium L-low C – contact but not learned</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Susan     | > 20 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | French H – school and uni. in Aust. and Switzerland  
German H – school  
Italian L – au pair in Italy |
| Orla      | > 10 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | French M – school  
Latin L – school  
Indonesian L - adult education  
Italian L - adult education |
| Bridget   | > 10 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | Latin H – school, university and taught  
French H – school, university and taught  
German H – school, university and taught  
Japanese L – adult education  
Indonesian L - adult education  
Italian – L (R only) adult education |
| Beatrice  | > 15 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | French H – school, lived and studied in France  
Indonesian M – lived and studied in Indonesia  
Italian L – travel in Italy  
Hindi, Khmer C - in India, Cambodia |
| Janice    | > 15 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | French H – school  
German H – school and lived in Germany  
Latin H – school  
Indonesian H – university and trained to teach it |
| Fiona     | > 10 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | Afrikaans L – from parents  
Uzbek M – lived in Uzbekistan  
Japanese L – lived and studied in Japan  
Turkish L – lived in Turkey  
German L – school  
Italian L – adult education  
Russian – C in Uzbekistan |
| Val       | > 25 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | French M – school and travel in France  
German M – school and travel in Germany  
Spanish L – adult education  
Indonesian L – adult education |
| Pamela    | > 20 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | French M - school  
Spanish M – working in South America  
Latin L – school  
Nepali L – working in Nepal |
| Paula     | > 10 years              | Elective bilingual NS  | English | English          | Spanish H – university  
French M - school |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>ESL teaching experience</th>
<th>Classified as</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Dominant language</th>
<th>Other languages: NN-near-native, H–high M–medium L–low C – contact but not learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felicity</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Elective bilingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Indonesian H – lived and studied in Indonesia</td>
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<td>Khmer L – lived in Cambodia</td>
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<td>French L – adult education</td>
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<td>Italian L – adult education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>Elective bilingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Indonesian H – uni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Elective bilingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French H – school, university, taught</td>
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<td>German H – school, university, taught</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Elective bilingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French H – school, university, taught</td>
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<td>West African Krio M – lived in W. Africa</td>
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<td>Latin L – school</td>
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<td>Ancient Greek L – school</td>
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<td>Mende C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Elective bilingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>German NN – school, uni, taught, lived in Germany</td>
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<td></td>
<td>French NN – school, university, taught, lived in Germany</td>
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<td>Japanese H – adult education, uni, lived in Japan, now teaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spanish L – adult education</td>
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<td>Greek L – adult education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mandarin L – adult education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French L – school</td>
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<td>Latin M – school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spanish L – school &amp; uni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French L – school</td>
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<td>Russian C – contact with family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French L – school</td>
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<td>Japanese L – adult education, visit to Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French L – school</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spanish L – adult education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French L – school</td>
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<td>Tamil C – lived in India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connie</td>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French L – school</td>
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<td>Anmatyer L – adult education and living in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>&gt; 25 years</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Latin H – school, university, taught</td>
</tr>
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<td>French L – school</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish L – adult education and visits to Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Swedish C – studying in Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Japanese C – living in Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
<td>Monolingual NS</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French C – from family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>German C – from family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Languages or linguistic codes other than English which teachers had learned or had sustained contact with

Afrikaans
Ancient Greek
Anmatyerr
Arabic
Austrian
Cantonese
Czech
Finnish
French
German
Greek
Hindi
Indonesian
Italian
Japanese
Khmer
Latin
Malay
Mandarin
Mende
Nepali
Panjabi
Polish
Russian
Schwäbian
Spanish
Swedish
Turkish
Urdu
Uzbek
West African Krio
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339


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