

Research Notes

Contents

Editorial Notes	1
Cambridge ESOL teacher training and development – future directions	2
The DELTA Revision Project – progress update	4
DELTA reliability: estimating and reporting examiner performance indices for the written examination component	8
What difference does DELTA make?	12
Setting international standards for teaching	16
Communities of practice and teacher education: the contribution of the CELTA trainer training programme	19
ICELT and PEP Ukraine: evaluation of a reflective ESP teacher development programme	24
Teaching Knowledge Test update – adoptions and courses	30
Recent publications of interest	33
Conference reports	34

Editorial Notes

Welcome to issue 29 of *Research Notes*, our quarterly publication reporting on matters relating to research, test development and validation for the Cambridge ESOL examinations and awards. In this issue we focus on the growing range of Cambridge ESOL qualifications and awards designed to support initial training and ongoing professional development for teachers of English worldwide.

In an introductory article, Monica Poulter describes the origins and evolution of the various teaching qualifications, as well as current trends and future directions; she highlights Cambridge ESOL's aspiration that those who opt for a Cambridge ESOL product will be engaged in a high-quality, positive learning experience and will, as a result, be better equipped to help learners of English succeed in their own language learning endeavours. The Certificate and Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA and DELTA) are key components within Cambridge ESOL's provision. Ron Zeronis provides a progress update on the current DELTA Revision Project which includes the development of a modular syllabus; Stuart Shaw describes a recent study to enhance the marking quality of the DELTA Written Examination in terms of standardisation, reliability and transparency; and Simon Phipps reports on a case study of one particular English language teacher for whom DELTA made a significant difference to their professional development.

Next, Monica Poulter considers the challenges involved in setting international standards for English language teaching, and the extent to which Cambridge ESOL seeks rigour through its standardised procedures for CELTA centres and assessors when assessing teaching practice. This is followed by an article by Jo-Ann Delaney who reports research in a UK context into the role of the CELTA trainer training programme; she investigated the extent to which the trainer training process reflects various features of Lave and Wenger's 1991 concept of 'communities of practice'. David Watkins describes an attempt to change existing English language teaching practices in an East European context through the adoption of In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) as a training course for teachers of English to military personnel. The centrality of practice has always been a key feature of the Cambridge ESOL awards and it is encouraging to see them prompting independent research studies.

Our Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), introduced in 2005, was developed in response to stakeholder-led demand for flexible professional development for teachers in contexts where training is not always easily accessible. Clare Harrison's article on the uptake of TKT to date reveals a wide range of contexts in which it has been used to confirm teachers' knowledge about teaching.

Finally, issue 29 includes a summary of some recent publications of interest, including the latest *Studies in Language Testing* volume along with conference news.

Editorial team for Issue 29: Lynda Taylor, Louise Maycock, Fiona Barker, Monica Poulter and Kirsty Sylvester.

Cambridge ESOL teacher training and development – future directions

MONICA POULTER ASSESSMENT AND OPERATIONS GROUP

Introduction

The teaching awards currently offered by Cambridge ESOL evolved from a suite of qualifications developed by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in the mid-1960s and administered by the RSA until 1988 when they were transferred to Cambridge. In the early nineties, a thorough revision of the pre-service certificate (CTEFLA) and higher level Diplomas (DTEFLA and DOTE) was undertaken and new syllabuses issued. CTEFLA was re-named as CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) and the DTEFLA and DOTE metamorphosed into DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults). A parallel syllabus (CELTYL) was introduced for teachers specialising in teaching young learners in the language school context. Revision of COTE (the in-service award designed for teachers in their permanent teaching context) was undertaken early in the current decade and the revised programme known as ICELT (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching) was introduced in 2004. As the twentieth anniversary of Cambridge's administration of the teaching awards approaches, it is a pertinent point at which to review how this provision has evolved and to consider future directions.

Origins and evolution of the teaching qualifications

An investigation into the history of the qualifications reveals some forgotten facts¹. Interestingly, it was the then Department for Education and Science (DES) which approached the RSA, having identified the need for a specialist qualification to train teachers to teach English to speakers of English as a second or foreign language. The RSA worked closely both with LEAs (Local Education Authorities) and the DES and the development of the teaching qualifications took place in a climate of mutual co-operation with representatives from state and private sector organisations working together purposefully.

It is significant that ESL and EFL were not then regarded as separate disciplines but rather as specialisations within the same area. In the late 1970s, two separate schemes for ESL and EFL teaching were developed and it was not until the revision of the qualifications in the mid-nineties that the distinctions started to disappear. The debate has re-emerged in the current decade and once again sector-specific qualifications have been developed for the FE ESOL sector (The Certificate in Further Education Teaching and the Certificate for ESOL Subject Specialists).

The RSA was (and still is) an important provider of vocational qualifications and the kind of training provided has always been focussed on development through practice. There was a clear recognition by those involved in creating the original awards that teacher training schemes should include practical as well as theoretical assessment – which was novel at the time. The centrality of practice has remained a key feature of the Cambridge ESOL Teaching awards. The effectiveness of this practice-based approach and the impact of Cambridge ESOL programmes are evident in the independent research undertaken by Jo-Ann Delaney and Simon Phipps, and in the report by David Watkins on the implementation of ICELT in the Ukraine – all included in this issue of *Research Notes*.

During the seventies and eighties further certificates and diplomas were developed by the RSA including Diplomas for teaching in multicultural schools (regrettably later discontinued), a certificate designed for 'non-native' teachers working in specific contexts outside the UK (COTE 1979–80) and a pre-service certificate in 1978 (the Preparatory Certificate, later re-named as CTEFLA). COTE and CTEFLA were transferred to Cambridge in 1988, together with the Diploma awards and a number of country-specific schemes.

This very brief and incomplete overview of the historical evolution of the RSA teaching awards is interesting as it demonstrates that issues with which Cambridge ESOL still engages today have always been at the heart of the debate on how best to meet teachers' needs within local constraints. Key concerns then and now are:

- recognition of the needs and constraints of different contexts
- the importance of engaging with the needs and demands of the state sector
- problems of integration with the state sector because of statutory requirements, funding rules, difficulty of gaining ministry recognition, especially if the qualification is administered by a 'foreign' organisation
- debate about categories of learners – ESL/ESOL or EFL. To what extent do their needs differ? When does specialist training/specialist assessment become necessary?
- recognition of the specialist skills required by teachers of younger learners and separate provision for these teachers
- debates on the language competence of English teachers.

Current trends

In the current climate of educational and training provision, customer needs are changing and are influenced by market forces and external demands. When the RSA teaching

1. This and the following two paragraphs draw on an unpublished *History of the RSA TEFL Schemes* written by Hazel Orchard.

awards were developed, they were unique in many respects and did not face competition from other providers. Online training courses did not exist. Training provision has become more global and more competitive at all levels. This trend has increased with the impact of new technology. Candidates now expect to have easy access to qualifications and to accumulate qualifications over time and according to need. Financial and time constraints mean that teachers cannot afford to duplicate training and are looking for modular, transferable qualifications.

There has been a major shift in the attitudes of those who undergo training and indeed those who subsequently employ them. For an increasingly more discriminating cohort of teacher trainees, employers and external bodies such as ministries of education, government agencies etc., it is no longer enough simply to have a certificate. In an ever more quality focussed ELT/Training environment, trainees and external agencies must be satisfied that a qualification ensures objectively measurable and relevant competencies, which allow progression to higher level qualifications and which enhance employability. This has resulted in an increased demand for evidence of rigour and quality. Cambridge ESOL has long-standing systems in place to ensure quality of teacher training course delivery – e.g. trainer training requirements for all trainers involved in Cambridge ESOL course-based awards (see Jo-Ann Delaney's article on CELTA trainer training). Rigour is ensured through standardisation procedures (see Monica Poulter's article on the standardisation of teaching practice assessment for CELTA centres and assessors) and reliability studies monitor and check that the marking of teaching award exams is consistent and fair (see Stuart Shaw's report on a DELTA marking validation exercise).

In the introduction to the November 2003 edition of *Research Notes*, which also focussed on Teaching Qualifications, reference was made to the problems of access to further professional development opportunities because of geographical constraints (no local centre available), financial constraints (resources needed to offer the course are unavailable – especially where teaching practice has to be directly observed), and time constraints (teachers have professional and personal commitments which make course attendance impractical or just too exhausting). Current DELTA has established itself as a rewarding but highly demanding course, but access to it is limited for some potential candidates because of these constraints. The introduction of the blended learning Distance DELTA programme increased access for a number of teachers and there is evidence that Distance Learning is the preferred learning style for a growing number of candidates. However, the fact remains that achieving DELTA can seem a monolithic task for many teachers. Access will be greatly facilitated by a modular DELTA programme, which will be available from September 2008. The modular format will allow candidates to achieve the qualification at their own pace and with options for personalised development within the programme. It will also allow those who have pursued a more academic, higher level qualification, such as an MA in ELT, to complement their qualification with a highly practical module that gives them the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge to classroom practice.

Ron Zeronis reports on the development of the Modular DELTA syllabus.

In the same November 2003 *Research Notes*, it was announced that a new test for teachers was under development. The Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) has now been developed in response to stakeholder-led demand for professional development for teachers in contexts where training is not always easily accessible. The test comprises three modules, any or all of which teachers can take according to need. The flexibility provided by this model has proved extremely popular and has widened access to a large number of teachers. The up-take of TKT reveals a surprising range of contexts in which TKT has been used to confirm teachers' knowledge about teaching, as reported by Clare Harrison in her article.

The variety of contexts in which Cambridge ESOL qualifications are adopted is nowhere more apparent than with ICELT (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching). A moderation meeting of ICELT coursework will take the moderator on a journey through public and private sectors, universities and schools, adult and younger learner classrooms in both primary and secondary schools and into work-based learning. David Watkins' article reports on the adoption of ICELT as a training course for teachers of English to military personnel who will be taking part in peacekeeping missions in troubled parts of the world.

Future directions

The teaching awards have of necessity evolved over the years to meet the demands of an ever-growing and increasingly diverse sector. Global mobility is a feature of the age and English language learning is often embedded in subject learning or in work-based contexts. Much business is conducted through the medium of English and, increasingly, English is used for international communication between speakers who are still developing their own competence as English language users.

In the forty year history of the RSA/Cambridge awards, the qualifications have been adapted to enable teachers to meet new challenges in their teaching. Now more than ever before, teachers need to be flexible and to be capable of meeting the diverse needs of their learners. Consequently the qualifications they choose need to provide them with engaging and enabling programmes that give the individual teacher credibility and competence together with an appropriate platform for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Teachers should complete courses having developed in their current teaching context; they should also have an awareness of the multiple contexts in which learning may take place and the professional skills to be able to adapt to different learner groups at future stages in their career. This awareness and skill can best be achieved through a broadening of the scope of teacher training courses, the provision of specialised and accessible CPD, and on-going support for teachers as they progress through their career. The Cambridge ESOL Teacher Portfolio has been developed for teachers to create an online professional record of their qualifications and experience. It can be used to log CPD and as a vehicle for CPD, e.g. the reflections area can be used to write

evaluations on teaching. It can also be used to record additional responsibilities and professional activities for which teachers do not always receive the credit they deserve. The Portfolio can be accessed at: www.teacherportfolio.cambridgeesol.org

Summary

We live in an increasingly service-led economy within which training is of major importance. Lifelong learning is emphasised because jobs can no longer be assured and those who do have a profession need to be able to respond and adapt to change. Nowhere is this more important than the teaching profession. Cambridge ESOL is fully aware that its qualifications need to continue to evolve to respond to

user demand. The awards and tests Cambridge ESOL currently offers, and those under development, cater for teachers with a wide range of needs and in a variety of contexts. As Cambridge ESOL's qualifications continue to evolve, the emphasis will be on flexibility of course structure, a broadening of content and options within courses, the creation of opportunities for CPD modules, and support provision – particularly easily accessible online support.

Our goal is to ensure that those who opt for a Cambridge ESOL product continue to be engaged in a high quality, positive learning experience and, as a result, are better equipped in turn to help learners succeed in their own language learning endeavours.

The DELTA Revision Project – progress update

RON ZERONIS ASSESSMENT AND OPERATIONS GROUP

Introduction

In early 2005, Cambridge ESOL began a comprehensive review of its advanced level qualification for English language teachers, the Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA). DELTA is Cambridge ESOL's flagship teaching qualification, and is widely seen as setting the standard for the profession. The review of DELTA is part of our policy to regularly evaluate our awards and qualifications to ensure their continued usefulness, fitness for purpose and reflection of best practice.

The Diploma, in its current incarnation, has been in operation for nearly ten years and it was felt that the qualification needed to undergo a thorough evaluation to ensure it was up to date and that it could continue to meet the needs of teachers in today's ELT environment. Specifically, it was felt that the syllabus should be examined to ensure the maintenance of a balance of coverage and to identify any gaps, that the delivery mode(s) should be reviewed, and that both the syllabus and the assessment should be evaluated for transparency and accessibility to both candidates and centres offering DELTA training courses in order not only to maintain, but to broaden DELTA's appeal to teachers working in a wide variety of contexts.

Background to DELTA

DELTA was introduced in 1998 as a revised version of the Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults (DTEFLA). It is accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England at Level 7 (Masters level) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It is designed for practising teachers with at least 1,200 hours of teaching experience and aims to integrate theory and practice in order to 'deepen their understanding of the

principles and practice of teaching English to adults' (Cambridge ESOL 2004: 2).

Content

The syllabus is divided into six units, covering the following areas:

- understanding, knowledge and awareness of language
- the background to teaching and learning English at adult level
- resources and materials
- working in the classroom
- evaluation, monitoring and assessment
- professional development.

Structure and delivery

The course requires 120 contact hours with tutors and 10 hours of teaching practice with adult learners whose first language is not English. In addition, candidates will typically spend around 300 hours on background reading, research and the preparation of assignments.

Candidates enter courses at Cambridge ESOL approved centres. The standard mode of delivery is via extensive courses (from six months to one year in length), completed while the teacher is in-service. There is also an intensive mode (typically eight weeks in length) and a distance mode (done online with a local tutor providing support).

Assessment

There are three assessed components for DELTA:

- A coursework portfolio consisting of seven assignments, including five assessed lessons (one of which is externally assessed by Cambridge ESOL) and supporting documentation, totalling nearly 15,000 words. The candidates' portfolios are moderated by Cambridge ESOL.

- An extended assignment of 4,500 words in the form of a case study of an individual learner, which is marked by Cambridge ESOL examiners.
- A three-and-a-half hour written examination set and marked by Cambridge ESOL.

Results for each component are reported as Fail, Pass or Distinction and candidates must achieve a pass in all three components to be awarded the Diploma.

The Review Process

In evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of DELTA in equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed in the modern ELT market, it was useful for the revision team to review the following areas in order to gain a more complete picture of the current state of DELTA: our overall approach and views regarding teacher education and development as reflected in DELTA; the content of the current syllabus; the amount and nature of assessment required on the course; and the delivery modes available. The review of the current course involved:

- Gaining an overview of current thinking on teacher education and language teacher education (LTE).
- Widespread consultation with stakeholders. This was done via a detailed questionnaire sent to over 200 trainers, employers, assessors, moderators, candidates and other education professionals, which produced over 80 detailed responses. There was also a series of briefing meetings and focus group meetings with key stakeholders.
- The commissioning of reports by expert ELT consultants to identify areas for revision and development.
- The analysis of 'soft feedback' gained over time from users.

Overall approach and views regarding teacher education and development

When looking at both historic and current thinking on approaches to teacher education, DELTA fares well. In their *Model for Teacher Education*, Tetenbaum and Mulkeen (1986:632) laid out what they called the 'nine core features of the model'. In their view, the best teacher education is:

1. Field-based, i.e. done in-service;
2. Problem-centred;
3. Technology-driven;
4. It contains experimental sharing;
5. Developmental;
6. Competency-based;
7. Expertly-staffed;
8. There is critical mass, or a high concentration of expert professional assistance in the training centre;
9. Open-ended.

This model is similar to those proposed by others researching this field. In an internal report prepared for the Cambridge ESOL revision team, White (2005) argued that DELTA in its current form met nearly all of these criteria: courses (both extensive and intensive) are delivered in

teaching centres (1) and teachers on those courses are typically in work and conduct teaching practice (TP) on either their own groups, or on TP groups provided by the centre. Indeed, the inclusion of supervised teaching practice was cited by many survey respondents as a unique feature of DELTA. The coursework, observation documentation and feedback and the case study are all problem-centred (2). Candidates are encouraged to engage in experimental practice (4), and this is the focus of one of the coursework assignments. Teacher development (5) is an explicitly stated aim of DELTA and is a defining feature of the course (Cambridge ESOL 2004). DELTA's learning outcomes are competency-based (6) (Cambridge ESOL 2004:6). DELTA trainers are subject to minimum professional requirements standards (7) and are approved by Cambridge ESOL. Centres typically contain a range of experienced trainers and staff teachers, whose expertise is available to candidates (8). Finally, DELTA aims to equip teachers with the analytical and reflective tools necessary for them to continue developing after the course has finished (9), and candidates are encouraged to do so (Cambridge ESOL 2004:12). The current syllabus however makes little mention of technology (3), and this was seen as a weakness, especially in the modern teaching environment. Although perhaps more relevant to content and delivery, it is worth noting that respondents in the survey cited Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the most important missing element in the syllabus and mentioned the absence of blended learning solutions as an issue in delivery.

Richards (1990:15) adds to the above criteria by stating that teachers' learning experiences should include practice teaching; observation; self and peer-observation; and seminars and discussion activities, all of which are strong features of DELTA.

In addition to the criteria listed above, Pennington (1990:135) articulates a view held by many that a key aim of teacher education should be to 'build tolerance in future teachers and teacher supervisors' with respect to approaches and perspectives on teaching and that 'practical training experiences' can help teachers develop open attitudes to approaches and also help them to be open to modifying their attitudes as they gain experience. Zeichner agrees, stating (1997:313) 'rather than just accepting existing traditions or curricula and imitating current practice, the effective teacher is seen as one who reflects on the question of what ought to be done.' Evans (2002:131) adds that effective teacher development includes both 'attitudinal development' and 'functional development'. Again, this is a strong feature of DELTA, commented on favourably by users, as there is no prescribed approach to ELT, and candidates are encouraged to reflect on their teaching. Woven throughout the DELTA syllabus is the need to adapt teaching to the needs of the learners in particular contexts. Evans states further (2002) that education (involving theory) and practical training are needed in methods, materials, curriculum and evaluation, all of which are described as the 'tools' of the teaching profession. It can be argued that this blend of theory and practice in DELTA is self-evident.

Zeichner's argument for the need for the development of

reflection skills in teachers is taken further by Wallace (Freeman and Richards 1996) who makes the case for the 'teacher as researcher'. Effective teacher education features training in research techniques so that teachers may investigate aspects of their practice. This sort of 'action research' can be done on training courses via an 'extended study of some sort'. Research techniques are covered in DELTA and action research is a major element of the course as candidates are required to complete an extended case study.

Content

Roberts (1998:139) and Richards and Farrell (2005) outline a set of objectives which form the knowledge base needed to become an effective teacher:

- subject matter knowledge
- pedagogical expertise
- self-awareness
- understanding of learners
- understanding of curriculum and materials
- enabling skills such as observation, reflection and research
- skills and attitudes promoting further development.

In mapping the content of DELTA to lists such as these, it was clear that DELTA addresses all of these issues and areas.

While feedback from the survey and from other consultation meetings with users was positive regarding the current syllabus content and the way in which DELTA reflects teachers' real world needs, a number of further possible areas of coverage were suggested, which reflect how ELT has changed since the mid to late 1990s. White (2005) recommended ICT skills as an area in need of inclusion given the prominence of technology both in and outside of the classroom and this was strongly supported in our survey of users. In another indication of the needs of the current ELT market, there was strong support during consultation for the inclusion of a focus on specialist areas. Those most often cited were: teaching younger learners (YL), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), ESOL and adult literacy, one-to-one teaching, teaching Business English, ELT management, and Skills for Life. This list is instructive in understanding the landscape of modern English language teaching. It shows that our users are operating in a variety of contexts, in state as well as private institutions, both in the UK and internationally, teaching learners of all ages. Finally, it was indicated that a revised syllabus should also include a greater emphasis on both diversity in the modern language classroom and the greater role of assessment in course design and delivery.

Centres indicated clearly, however, that the practical constraints of running courses, both financial and logistical, meant that they would find any additional content in the course difficult to cope with, while remaining strongly committed to the core focus of DELTA on the teaching of English to Adults. The challenge then was to explore ways to provide candidates with specific content, in addition to the

core content, that is relevant to their needs without placing extra burdens on centres.

Of further interest was the *balance* of content areas in relation to each other as represented in the syllabus. In an internal report Poulter (2005) noted that the content in the six units of the DELTA syllabus is unevenly distributed. For example, all systems (grammar, lexis, phonology) and skills are covered in Unit 1. Also, a large number of criteria relate to this unit, while a relatively small number of assessment criteria relate to the whole of Unit 5 (Resources and Materials). This has sometimes led to confusion for centres new to DELTA as they may assume that because Unit 5 is one of six units, they should devote as much input time to sessions on resources and materials as they do to systems and skills, which is not the case.

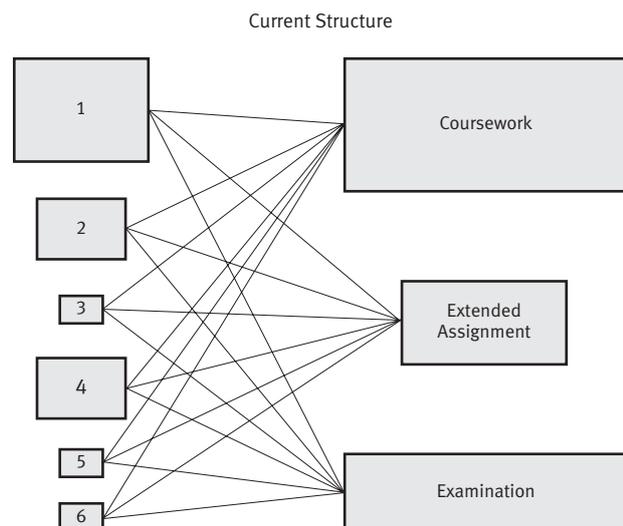
Assessment

There is a general feeling among users of DELTA that the amount of assessment on the course is 'substantial', in the words of one user. However, responses in our survey indicated that users felt it was appropriate, with one respondent saying 'this thoroughness is what makes DELTA a respected and worthwhile qualification.' While sharing this view, those running the course intensively indicated that they find the assessment load difficult.

Users felt there was a good balance in DELTA between assessment of theory and assessment of practice. The link between the research done for the background assignments and the practical teaching was seen as 'ensuring a good balance', in the words of one respondent.

This integration is not only between theory and assessment, but extends between all three assessed components and each unit of the syllabus, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 : DELTA syllabus units and assessments



The result is a very thorough system in terms of coverage of the syllabus, but it is a very complex system of assessment.

Finally, with regard to the written examination, users felt that it was effective, but limited in its coverage as this questionnaire respondent makes clear, 'Wider variety would

help towards encouraging a wider breadth of knowledge.’ There was also the feeling that the written examination was duplicating assessment found elsewhere and that testing aspects of practical teaching in this format was not desirable.

Delivery modes

Users were less enthusiastic about DELTA’s lack of flexibility in delivery and there were many suggestions for more varied ways of providing the course. Many called for a modular format, and this certainly seems to be increasing in popularity, with White (2005) stating that ‘modularity is now the default state in a wide range of levels and types of qualification and training.’ This sentiment is echoed in the European Profile for Language Teacher Education.

Revision recommendations

Overall, users have made it very clear that DELTA and the approach to teacher education which it embodies, is regarded as the industry benchmark. It is the ‘gold standard’, as one user put it. A good example of this status is the fact that when the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) released information on a new EAP qualification it was developing, DELTA was taken as their starting point (White 2005:12). It was seen as very important that a revised DELTA maintain its status as the industry standard, to continue to ‘make a difference’ to teacher development, as Simon Phipps states in his case study elsewhere in this issue.

With that in mind, and in light of the evaluation work conducted, a number of clear aims were established for a revised DELTA:

- to create an accessible and modularised DELTA with flexible entry points for candidates
- to enable candidates to acquire DELTA in stages over time
- to provide within DELTA the opportunity to include a focus on specialist teaching, e.g. teaching young learners, business English
- to encourage more flexible delivery, e.g. blended learning options
- to allow for individual modules to be taken as Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- to certificate partial achievement.

Specific revision proposals were put forward in late 2006 to help achieve these aims and to make DELTA more relevant and accessible to more teachers in a greater variety of contexts. Chief among these was the decision to introduce a modular syllabus. From September 2008, DELTA will comprise three separately certificated modules, described below.

Content

While retaining DELTA’s integration of theory and practice, each module will have a distinct focus. Module One is provisionally entitled ‘Understanding language and skills for teaching’ and will cover the background to learning and teaching, covering e.g. language and skills knowledge, teacher roles, theories of language acquisition, the

historical development of ELT. Module Two will focus on candidates’ teaching and will include input on approaches and methodology, managing learning, preparation and planning. The module will be provisionally titled ‘Developing professional practice’. Module Three will meet employers’ growing needs for teachers skilled in teaching in specific contexts by requiring candidates to focus on a chosen area of specialisation. It will be provisionally entitled ‘Extending practice and ELT specialisation’ and will cover areas such as syllabus design, assessment, and research into a specialist area. Syllabus specifications in the form of content and learning outcomes for all three modules are currently in development.

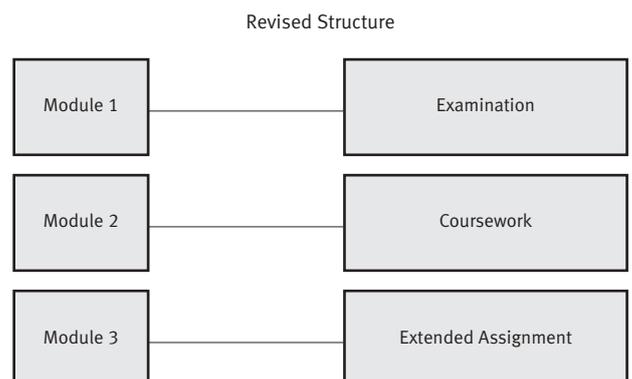
Assessment

In DELTA from September 2008, there will continue to be three separately assessed components. However, these will now be tied directly to a single module in order to reduce the complexity of the current system (see Figure 2). The content of Module One will be assessed via a written examination, which will be a revised version of the current format to allow for full coverage of the Module One syllabus. Module Two will be assessed via observation of candidates’ teaching and associated written assignments. However, the format and scope of these will be different from the current portfolio required. Module Three will be assessed via an extended written assignment focusing on learners in a specialist context to allow candidates to develop expertise in a chosen specialism.

Delivery modes

Three modules will be developed and will replace the single course format currently used. Each module will be designed to stand alone, will be separately certificated and each will have an Masters-level credit value. This will allow candidates to receive credit for each module successfully completed and the credit values will allow users to more easily see how DELTA fits in to the frameworks of other qualifications. Modularity should increase DELTA’s flexibility and make it more attractive to teachers in a wider variety of contexts than at present. Candidates will be able to choose to enter a single module or any combination of modules, depending on their needs. Centres will have the option of delivering courses for separate modules, or delivering DELTA as a unitary course (all three modules being run concurrently by a centre).

Figure 2 : DELTA modules and assessment from September 2008



Revision timetable

In September 2007, full specifications for all three modules of revised DELTA will be available to allow centres to begin planning new courses from September 2008. Sample materials, guidance documents and seminars will be available from early 2008, and there will be regular updates and information in Cambridge ESOL bulletins, on the website, and via presentations at international conferences throughout the latter half of 2007 and into 2008. In addition, Cambridge ESOL will be working with key stakeholders to maintain current recognition and we will also be working to extend recognition of DELTA.

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DELTA reliability: estimating and reporting examiner performance indices for the written examination component

STUART SHAW RESEARCH AND VALIDATION GROUP

Introduction

The study presented here describes a project which aimed to put in place a system for checking and confirming the reliability of the marking of the examining team for the Written Examination component of the June and December administrations of DELTA. A system for rating examiner performance provides the statistical data needed to enable an objective evaluation and vetting of the examining team and to scrutinise the performance of the mark scheme over time. This ensures a standardised, transparent and reliable approach to marking.

Context of study

The Written Examination paper is provided twice a year and is externally set and marked. Candidates are given three and a half hours to complete the paper. The examination consists of three compulsory questions, each of which has three tasks. Candidates are presented with some ELT-

related data for each question. The tasks require the candidate to work with the data provided. Answers are normally in continuous prose but guidance is given when this is necessary. Each task is marked according to a three-level scale: Fail, Pass and Distinction. To obtain a Pass in the examination, the candidate must pass at least one task in each question and, in total, pass a minimum of five out of nine tasks. To obtain a Distinction, candidates must pass all nine tasks and be awarded a distinction in at least two tasks in different questions.

To achieve Pass level, candidates' work must meet the following criteria: *Relevance* (the answer conforms to the task specification); *Language* (the answer is clear, accurate, easy to follow and does not impose a strain on the reader); *Application* (the answer draws on knowledge of relevant methodological principles and practices gained from personal experience, background reading, and work covered in the course, and applies this knowledge appropriately to the task); *Clarity* (the answer provides

clear, coherent and focused description or analysis, making explicit any underlying assumptions about teaching and learning).

At Distinction level candidates need to meet all the Pass criteria and in addition, offer consistent evidence of being outstanding in terms of breadth of knowledge; depth of understanding; insight into learners and learning; making connections between theory and practice and vice versa.

Trial methodology

Any mechanism for estimating and reporting reliability requires that appropriate validation studies are conducted before it is implemented in the live operational context. It is essential to the success of the mechanism, therefore, that considerable effort is devoted to investigating its efficacy prior to its widespread use. To this end, a multiple marking trial was undertaken to coincide with the marking of the December 2005 administration. The trial employed a range of quantitative methods for the verification of validity and reliability.

A version of gold-standard seeding was trialled where three common or 'Gold-Standard' (GS) scripts were embedded into the allocation of each Assistant Examiner (AE) and Team Leader (TL). A GS script is a clean copy of a script previously marked by a senior examiner such as the Principal Examiner (PE). GS scripts should ideally be uniformly distributed and represent a wide range of marks reflecting performance across the rating scale. Scripts identified as potentially suitable for use as GS would be selected for their low deviation of scores when marked definitively. In addition, scripts should be selected that represent 'adequate' and 'inadequate' candidate performances, as well as scripts that present problems that examiners are faced with but which are rarely described in rating scales, for example, responses that indicate that the candidate misunderstood the task. Ideally, a PE would determine, in consensus with a small group of other PEs or senior TLs and in advance of marking, what the score should be on a sample number of scripts. However, given the size of the DELTA candidature and its concomitant examiner pool, the PE for the paper was responsible for assigning the definitive GS. Clearly, this constitutes an obvious difficulty as the standard is imposed by a single examiner rather than being arrived at by consensus. Another potential issue relates to the principle of gold standard seeding. Ideally, GS scripts (with pre-agreed marks) should be introduced into an examiner's work at certain intervals and in secret. The common core GS trial scripts were first photocopied before being distributed to examiners, i.e. each examiner received the same set of three responses. In this sense, examiners were fully aware which scripts were GS and, therefore, which would be subject to additional senior examiner scrutiny. In any event, however, examiners still had to assess these scripts in a reliable and consistent manner.

In outline, the trial procedure was to standardise a group of examiners using the current rating scale, and then do multiple marking of the set of three common scripts as part of their normal live script apportionment. The scripts were chosen to exemplify a clear Pass, a clear Distinction and a

borderline Fail. Each script comprised 3 questions; each question comprised 3 tasks i.e. 9 tasks per question: a total of 27 tasks or, in other words, 27 instances of candidate performance from each script. Scripts were distributed to examiners once they had completed approximately 60% of their allocated marking. This was done in order to ensure complete familiarity with the markscheme. The eight examiners were independent and highly experienced Cambridge ESOL DELTA examiners and included: 1 PE; 2 TLs; and 5 AEs.

Marks were collected from each AE and TL on all nine tasks for each of the three scripts and these were recorded in tabular form to produce a matrix from which the necessary statistics were derived. Data on individual examiner performance were collected as well as information on the examiners as a group. The mark of the GS scripts was compared to the marks awarded by the trial examiners. These comparisons enabled examiner performance anomalies to be easily identified. Data garnered from the trial facilitated an understanding of how the proposed system could function operationally by addressing a number of questions relating to:

Examiner group-level performance indices

- What is the inter-rater reliability coefficient for the AE/TL group (a) for each GS script and (b) for all three GS scripts combined?
- What is the proportion of agreement between the AE/TL group and the GS script (a) for each assessment criterion and (b) for all assessment criteria?
- What levels of agreement exist between the evaluations of the examiners when rating the same sets of scripts?

Examiner individual-level performance indices

- What is the proportion of agreement between each individual examiner and the GS?
- What is the correlation between each individual examiner and the GS?

Examiner training implications

- Can future training of DELTA examiners be targeted at achieving better consensus in the script awards where the greatest discrepancies lie?
- On what basis should GS scripts be selected and which scripts would be most effective for future training?

Operational estimation of examiner performance indices

- What information regarding group-level and individual-level performance can be successfully captured (in an Excel spreadsheet, say) that is easy to design, read, interpret and reproduce?
- What is the minimum level of detail that should be captured in the spreadsheet?
- Can the same spreadsheet be used for providing information about examiner performance on different levels (for example, task-level and question level)?
- Can formulae and calculations in the spreadsheet be updated quickly and efficiently to accommodate new data?

- Can the operational techniques developed for this study point out where disagreements between examiners most often occur?
- Can generic feedback be generated and conveyed to examiners using a standard form?

Findings

A principal aim of the marking trial was to demonstrate the reliability of the DELTA written examination. It was hoped that the use of a range of quantitative methodologies would offer valuable insights into the efficacy of the system. Quantitative methodologies included correlational analyses, inter-rater reliabilities, ANOVA, and FACETS.

Specific conclusions gleaned from the trial can be related to the various statistical methods employed throughout the analysis of the trial data. Although there were slight differences in overall severity between examiners, descriptive statistics and ANOVA indicated that the examiners were homogeneous in their marks.

ANOVA revealed no significant differences between examiner ratings. Post-hoc tests and FACETS analyses corroborated this finding. Whilst in terms of absolute scores examiners demonstrated some disparity in rating, any differences were marginal and for all practical purposes the examiner group can be thought of as being equally severe.

Mean examiner intercorrelations were consistently high and statistical significance tests indicated that the strength of correlation was such that there was evidence of strong relationships between examiners. Inter-rater reliabilities were also consistently, and encouragingly, high – of the order of 0.75–0.78. Strength of agreement tests revealed levels of agreement between the evaluations of examiners when rating the same sets of DELTA tasks. Surprisingly, the strength of agreement statistic indicated only a moderate level of examiner agreement despite high inter-rater reliabilities. Computation of an inter-rater index is related to, and contingent upon, correlation. Whilst correlation is an indication of examiner consistency it is also a measure of an examiner's ability to rank order their marking of a set of performances. Clearly, DELTA examiners were in general agreement on the rank ordering of tasks although they were in less agreement regarding the absolute mark assigned to those tasks. In any event, the computed strength of agreement was significantly greater than that level which would be expected by chance. 'Strength of agreement' techniques have the advantage that the agreement matrix generated for the calculation of the agreement statistic shows clearly any variance amongst examiners. This has great potential value for the training of DELTA examiners. The technique can point out where disagreements most often occur. Future training of examiners can, therefore, be targeted at achieving better consensus in the rating categories where the greatest discrepancies lie. The technique can also indicate which scripts are most effective for future training sets.

Multi-faceted Rasch Analyses (MFRA) using FACETS revealed that all examiners fell within the limits of acceptable model fit and that whilst examiners were not equally severe in their assessments any differences in severity (between the most and least severe) were marginal.

Additionally, FACETS indicated that all examiners were operating within an acceptable range of consistency of performance. Encouragingly, the GS ratings manifested virtually no severity. FACETS indicated no 'problematic' ratings across the examiner group suggesting that none of the individual examiners were 'misfitting' the Rasch model. FACETS revealed a reasonable range in script performance. For the December 2005 session, Tasks 1.2 and 2.2 were the most challenging and 3.1 and 3.2 the least challenging.

Operational templates (spreadsheets in Excel) were constructed which were used to capture examiner rating information at both the question and task level (see Table 1). Each spreadsheet contained information on marks awarded by the PE (GS) and marks awarded by TLs and AEs. The bottom three rows in Table 1 contain information on individual examiner-level performance, more specifically:

- the *number* of instances of agreement between each examiner and the GS
- the *proportion* of agreement between each examiner and the GS (expressed in percentages), and
- the *correlation coefficient* (Corr.) as a measure of how well raters agree with the GS.

The two right-most columns in Table 1 provide information on group examiner-level performance:

- the *number* of instances of agreement between examiners as a group and the GS on each of the marking criteria, and
- the *proportion* of agreement between examiners as a group and the GS (expressed in percentages).

The spreadsheets were designed to allow inputting of new data in the most time-efficient manner while minimising the scope for error.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study constitutes an attempt to establish a more transparent and efficient system for demonstrating examiner reliability on the DELTA written examination. As this phase of the work was designed to be exploratory, the general conclusions must be seen as tentative, particularly as the examiner performance indices generated by the proposed marking technique are based on examiner behaviour on only three GS scripts (although comprising 27 performances). Nevertheless, the results will enable further research to develop a more focused perspective for any subsequent amendment to the marking technique as well as providing insightful observations into the way DELTA examiners mark. One possible development relates to enhancing performance indices through additional review marking (see Figure 1). The DELTA candidature permits extensive review marking of examiner scripts. This is currently undertaken on an operational basis for approximately 40–50% of all scripts which have been 'first' marked. The review marker (PE and/or TL) reviews a proportion of scripts allocated to each examiner during live marking. Where disagreement exists, the review marker's marks supersede the examiner's marks. The check, therefore, routinely generates pairs of marks i.e. PE or TL/examiner, and facilitates a further comparison. Random

Table 1: A sample Excel spreadsheet providing information at DELTA question level

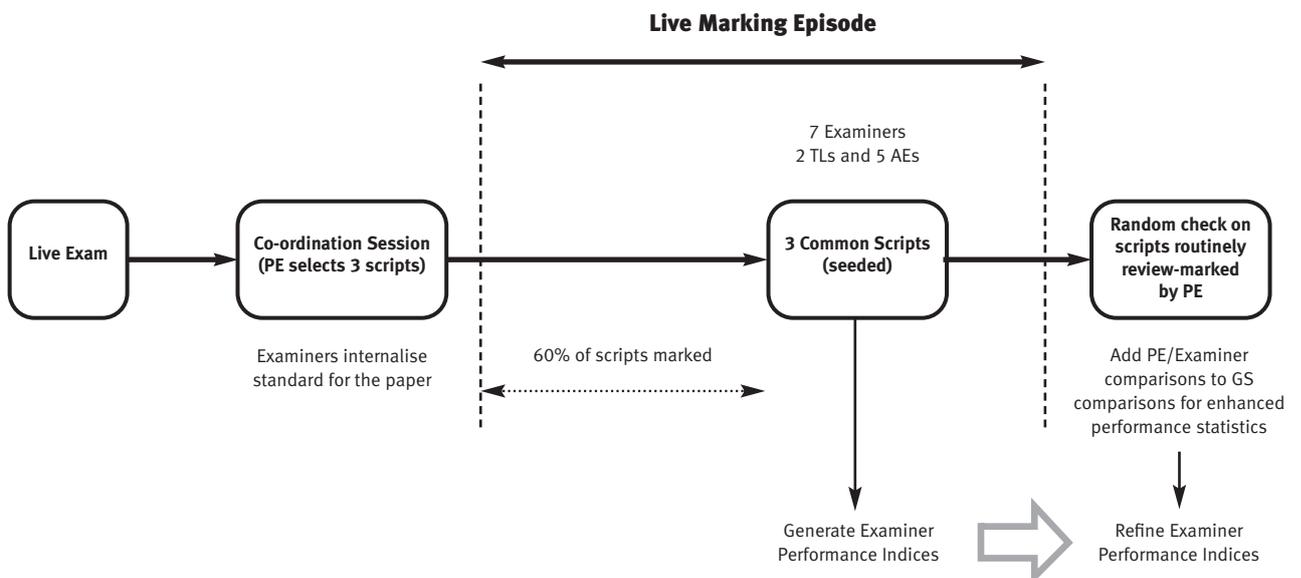
DELTA Examiner Performance Data												
Session:		Dec-05										
Question:		1										
Script	Task	GS	Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	No.	%	
Distinction	1.1	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	28.57
	1.2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	5	71.43
	1.3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	7	100.00
Pass	1.1	4	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	28.57
	1.2	5	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	28.57
	1.3	6	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	42.86
Fail	1.1	7	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	3	42.86
	1.2	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100.00
	1.3	9	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	5	71.43
		No.	6	3	4	7	5	5	6			
		%	66.67	33.33	44.44	77.78	55.56	55.56	66.67			
		Corr.	0.80	0.46	0.49	0.85	0.60	0.69	0.72			

checking of review ‘pairs’ for a particular examiner can be compared with, and used to enhance, performance indices derived from the GS seeding exercise for the same examiner where concerns about performance exist. This level of fine tuning would be undertaken at the discretion of the Cambridge ESOL Subject Officer for the paper where it is deemed both appropriate and fruitful.

In addition to incorporating a ‘fine-tuning’ quality

assurance mechanism, examiner performance indices can be translated into explicit statements of performance. A set of performance indices could be located within a generic performance type and then a particular feedback descriptor, invoked from a list giving specific qualitative descriptions covering a range of performance, could be triggered and reported as feedback to the examiner in question.

Figure 1 : DELTA marking workflow



What difference does DELTA make?

SIMON PHIPPS BILKENT UNIVERSITY, ANKARA, TURKEY

Introduction

The increasing professionalisation of teacher education has led to a great increase in the amount of research being conducted on teacher education in recent years (Korthagen & Russell 1995), but there is as yet no conclusive evidence as to what constitutes effective teacher education (Cochran-Smith 2005). This is particularly so in language teacher education where relatively little research has been conducted (Borg 2005), and most of that has been in pre-service teacher education.

The process by which teacher education and teaching experience lead to effective teaching is both complex and hard to define (Pickering 2005). Nevertheless, there does seem to be some consensus that teacher education is likely to have a greater impact if it balances theory and practice (Darling-Hammond 2006), if it enables teachers to make links to their own teaching context (Roberts 1998), and if it combines input, observation, peer observation, written work and opportunities for research (Wallace 1996, Pennington 1996). There is also evidence to suggest that teacher education which focuses explicitly on teachers' existing beliefs is more likely to change these beliefs (Richardson 1996). There is, however, a definite need for more research, especially on in-service teacher education.

In-service teacher education aims to help improve professional performance (Wallace 1991), and this involves helping teachers to change their beliefs, thinking and teaching. The DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults) course aims specifically to help teachers to:

- acquire new insights and a deeper understanding of the principles and practice of ELT to adults
- examine current practices and beliefs
- apply the results of their learning and reflection to their current professional practice. (DELTA Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines, 2003).

It is crucial that teacher educators develop an understanding of the complex ways in which an in-service course, such as DELTA, interacts with and impacts on teachers taking it. What difference does it make to their knowledge, understanding, awareness, beliefs and practice? Which aspects of the course contribute to teacher learning, and in what ways? Answers to these questions will enable DELTA tutors and course organisers to better understand how to help teachers learn and improve.

The importance of teachers' beliefs

There is now increasing evidence which suggests that: teachers' beliefs strongly influence what and how teachers learn during teacher education (Richardson 1996); that they are deep-rooted and resistant to change (Borg 2003); that they may outweigh the effects of teacher education

(Williams & Burden 1997), hence the old adage; 'teachers teach as they are taught, not as they are taught to teach'; and that they are one of the most important factors influencing the way teachers teach (Richards 1998). Yet, even if teachers' beliefs do change, there is no guarantee that this will be translated into a change in actual teaching (Richardson 1996). Contextual factors, such as prescribed curricula, a lack of time, and the need to prepare students for examinations, may hinder teachers' attempts to teach in line with their beliefs (Burns 2003, Farrell & Lim 2005). Alternatively teachers' classroom practice may change without any corresponding changes in their beliefs. This may happen when teachers are concerned about passing their teaching practice, and attempt to teach in a way they think their course tutors expect.

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice, then, would seem to be extremely complex, such that any attempt to understand the impact of teacher education will need to consider the processes which shape their teaching behaviour. This means attempting to understand the complexities of their daily lives, their thinking, and the link between their beliefs, their thinking and their actual classroom practice.

How to measure impact

Typically impact studies in teacher education tend to focus on one or more of the following: teachers' feelings or reactions to a course; their learning; their behaviour; and results in terms of student learning (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2006). Strategies used to measure impact include questionnaires, interviews, observations and journal writing, although concept mapping and repertory grids may also be used (Borg 2006). The strategies used to investigate the impact of teacher education will inevitably be determined by how we define the concept of impact, and this will in turn be determined by how we define the purpose of teacher education. The extent to which we consider that the main purpose of a teacher education course is to impart knowledge, change existing beliefs, improve teaching or develop reflective skills, will influence what data we collect and how we collect it.

Teacher learning is such a complex process that reliance on any one instrument runs the risk of eliciting results which are both simplistic and misleading. Questionnaires are often used in an attempt to 'demonstrate' positive feelings, or change in knowledge or beliefs, but on their own they are inadequate in being able to capture the complexity of teacher learning (Borg 2006). Even if the strategies used are able to identify change, it is notoriously difficult to prove what factors have caused such change, especially as teachers change naturally over time anyway. I strongly believe that we can only begin to understand the

complex nature of the impact of teacher education on teachers by working closely with them and attempting to explore what is beneath the surface.

A case study of a DELTA teacher

As part of a larger ongoing study, I wanted to explore the effects of a DELTA course on teacher learning, with particular emphasis on grammar teaching. Considering the aims of the DELTA course, it seemed appropriate that impact should be investigated in terms of changes in teachers' understanding, awareness, ability to reflect, existing beliefs and classroom practice. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- Does DELTA make a difference?
- If so, in what ways?
- What aspects of DELTA help teacher learning?
- What are the implications of this for teacher education?

The study investigated the development of one DELTA teacher over a period of 4 months. As this particular DELTA course is run over 18 months, the study focused on the first part of the course which included the first language assignment and teaching practice. During this time there was substantial focus on grammar teaching and learning during the course.

A variety of instruments were chosen to safeguard against the limitations of any one strategy (Borg 2006). Data was collected using the following instruments: a reflective journal; two interviews; and two observations and post-observation interviews. The reflective journal consisted of weekly reflections on the course guided by questions about grammar teaching and learning posed by the researcher. Responses and follow-up questions were used to gradually narrow the focus of the journal to specific issues of mutual interest. The two interviews were conducted after 2 and 4 months respectively, and were used to explore the teacher's perceptions of the effect of the course. Issues arising from the journal were probed in greater detail. The two observations were used as a basis for discussion of issues arising from the journal and first interview, and to explore possible 'mismatches' between the teacher's 'espoused beliefs' and their classroom practice. The interviews, observations and post-observation interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Findings

DELTA makes a difference

Not surprisingly, the results of the study highlighted the complexity of the impact of teacher education on teacher learning. The DELTA clearly made a difference to the teacher in terms of confidence, awareness, beliefs and classroom teaching. These differences are to a large extent intangible and difficult to quantify, and it would not have been possible to identify them by merely using traditional end-of-course questionnaires.

The teacher's confidence improved in three ways. Firstly, when planning lessons, she has a better grasp of where to start, how to choose a lesson shape, and how to structure

stages of the lesson and activities. Secondly, she is better able to respond to students during the lesson, to think on her feet, and to deal with unexpected questions. Thirdly, she has developed the confidence to experiment with different aspects of her teaching.

The teacher also improved her critical awareness of her existing beliefs, her own teaching and the reasons for certain classroom behaviours, developed a better understanding of student needs and problems, and increased the depth of her understanding of ELT terminology.

The development of the teacher's beliefs about grammar teaching and learning was particularly interesting, as there were few tangible changes to existing beliefs. Instead many existing beliefs were confirmed, deepened and strengthened. Studies using traditional questionnaires would have appeared to show that the course had had little effect, but here we saw how important it is for teachers to understand the rationale behind their beliefs and underlying theory which supports and adds weight to them. The teacher was initially unaware of many of her existing beliefs, had not questioned them critically, and was mostly unaware of how they related to theory. A major goal of teacher education should be to encourage greater awareness of teachers' own beliefs, their theoretical basis and how they relate to teachers' own classroom practice, rather than simply to change existing beliefs.

In terms of teaching, the course did not seem to lead to any radical changes, but clearly had an effect on the depth of thinking the teacher puts into her planning and in-class decision-making. Planning and teaching have become more principled, the teacher is better aware of available options when planning, tends to plan in much greater detail, and has a better grasp of the principles behind the decisions she is taking. She is more aware of the links between her planning, teaching and students' learning, and is better able to identify students' needs and predict problems that might arise during the lesson. Some aspects of her teaching are becoming more automatic, and are done without having to consciously think about them:

'I am more aware of the things going on in my class and the student needs, and now I know that if some sort of need arises I'll be able to cater for that need appropriately in a way. And having this confidence is different, that I'll be able to reach them.'

Some practical examples

I will now illustrate the difference DELTA made to the teacher in terms of confidence, awareness, beliefs and teaching, by focusing on three issues related to grammar teaching which emerged from the data; namely, PPP, oral error correction, and the use of group-work for oral practice. Where relevant, excerpts are given from the interview data.

Prior to the course the teacher had developed a routine for teaching grammar which she characterised as PPP (presentation-practice-production), and which she had learnt from her initial CELTA training. The course led her to question this, and to explore both the theoretical basis for it, and its effect on learners. Having to plan lessons in detail for assessed teaching practice also led her to consider different options for each 'P' stage of the lesson, and to

question the relative value of inductive and deductive presentation. The course also raised her awareness of alternative lesson shapes, such as TTT (test-teach-test) and TBL (task-based learning), and gave her the confidence and enthusiasm to learn more about these and to experiment with them in her own teaching.

'Before I wasn't able to define what it is exactly. I thought I was able to, but I wasn't actually. But now I think I am more aware of the concept of it, and authentically use it in a way for my own purpose and for students' purposes.'

Initially the teacher expressed a lack of confidence and unease with correcting learners' grammatical errors orally in class. Despite feeling that this was something the teacher should do, she was unsure why and how to do this without having a negative influence on learners' affect. The course made her aware how important oral error correction can be in helping learners notice their own errors, and this awareness encouraged her to experiment with it in her own teaching. Although she seemed to need to consciously factor this into her teaching at first, it soon became automatic, and she no longer needs to think about it consciously before or during lessons.

'I can comfortably correct my students and try to challenge them more now. Before the course I would be hesitant. I wouldn't be this straight-forward before. But now I am very straight-forward. Now I feel more comfortable correcting. Before I felt uncomfortable, I was always thinking about the affective factors, but now I'm more comfortable from that point.'

At the start of the course the teacher tended not to use group-work for oral practice even though she expressed the belief that this was useful for learners. She seemed to be concerned that such group-work might either lead to classroom management problems, or make it difficult for her to monitor students' learning and give them feedback on their errors.

'Having them working in pairs or groups, asking them each other, I wouldn't be able to observe them, to monitor them. I'd be worried about whether I'd be able to monitor them. If they produce something incorrectly it could go into fossilization. So, I tend to be quite controlled.'

Although she was aware that group-work may increase the amount of speaking time given to each learner, a lack of confidence seemed to be preventing her from incorporating this into her teaching. The course enabled her to question this and to personally seek out an opportunity to peer-observe a colleague who used a lot of group-work. Having seen that group-work both contributed to students' learning and did not result in classroom management problems gave her the confidence to start experimenting in her own teaching. After a few weeks, she found that group-work actually gave her the time during the lesson to monitor students' learning, think and then to adapt the lesson accordingly, thus giving her more flexibility in her teaching. This made her feel more in control, rather than less in control as she had initially feared. Thus seeing that the benefits of new practice outweigh potential disadvantages to her personally seemed to be crucial in changing her own classroom practice.

Factors which helped learning

Part of the DELTA course focused initially on helping make teachers' existing beliefs explicit, and encouraging them to question them in the light of their reading, input sessions and reflection of their own teaching. This seemed to raise questions in the teacher's own mind which she herself wanted to explore as the course went on. Reflective tasks during the course also helped the teacher explore the relationship between her beliefs and her teaching. Being able to then discuss issues in her mind and tensions between her beliefs and teaching with her tutor and ask questions enabled her to explore personally relevant issues in depth. Thus the beliefs focus, reflective tasks and individual support all contributed considerably to the teachers' learning. These did cause some initial confusion, but the teacher expressed the view that this was a necessary step in her learning process, as it forced her to seek answers.

The assessed teaching practice element of the course also played a major role in the teacher's learning. Having to plan lessons in greater detail than she was used to, and having to justify choices in terms of both theory and learner needs forced the teacher to critically question her own 'teaching habits', and to plan her lessons in a more principled and detailed way. Tutor guidance, support and feedback also helped raise awareness and stimulate questions in the teacher's mind. The pressure of assessment tended to have a positive effect as it encouraged the teacher to explore issues in much greater detail than she would have done otherwise. Having to bring ideas together in the written assignments also helped the teacher notice gaps in her own knowledge and understanding, and to raise questions in her mind that she needed to seek answers to.

Another key factor in the teacher's learning seems to be the opportunity to observe demo lessons or activities, and to peer-observe experienced colleagues. Seeing real-life examples of alternative practice, and how this impacted on both the teacher and learners seemed to be crucial in giving the teacher sufficient confidence to experiment with her own teaching by trying out new ideas. Having gained this confidence, the teacher was able to try out new ideas in her own class, and having seen that these brought benefits to her and to learners, she was then able to start incorporating them into her everyday teaching.

There would seem to be certain key factors which stimulated the teacher's learning during the DELTA course:

- an explicit focus on teacher beliefs
- reflective tasks which encourage critical engagement with input, beliefs and teaching
- individual guidance, support and feedback
- having to plan lessons in detail, justify choices made, and relate these to theory and learner needs
- having to write assignments which relate teaching to theory and learner needs
- being able to see real examples of alternative practice, and how they impact on the teacher and learners
- being able to experiment, and see how it works for herself and her learners.

Implications for teacher education

The findings also highlight a number of key implications for teacher education.

Firstly, although this study only focused on one teacher, the findings are important in that they show not only how complex the interaction between teacher education and teachers' thinking and teaching really is, but also that simplistic strategies for collecting data will merely give us simplistic answers which do not really help us to comprehend the ways in which teacher learning is being both helped and hindered by what we do. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which teachers learn from teacher education courses, we need to work more closely with individual teachers.

Secondly, teachers may need considerable support to be able to translate their beliefs into practice. Teachers may hold a particular belief about language learning but without understanding what this means in practice they may not be able to teach in accordance with that belief. Teacher education courses have a key role to play in encouraging teachers to explore their beliefs and understand what these mean in practice.

Thirdly, it can be useful to engage teachers in discussions of the relationship between their beliefs and practices. Their own awareness of such differences can trigger awareness and act as a springboard for them to explore their own beliefs and teaching in greater depth. Similarly, teacher educators can deepen their understandings of how teachers learn.

Fourthly, beliefs are part of a complex system, and one belief may be outweighed by another stronger belief. A teacher's concern for learners' affect, for example, may override her belief that oral grammatical errors should be corrected. Course tutors need to be aware of this when giving feedback on classroom practice, as a teacher may already know how correcting learners' errors helps their learning, and simply reiterating this is unlikely to help the teacher solve the tension in her own mind. Instead, it may be more useful to discuss how she can correct learners affectively.

Finally, although teachers benefit from a balance of input, reading, teaching practice, peer observation, reflection and written assignments, teacher education courses, such as DELTA, may be even more effective if they pay particular attention to the following issues in some way:

- engaging with and challenging teacher beliefs
- helping teachers explore their own beliefs and teaching
- encouraging and guiding reflection through tasks which encourage critical engagement with input, beliefs and teaching
- providing individual guidance, support and feedback
- enabling teachers to explore issues which are relevant to them
- providing real examples of alternative practice, and exploring how they impact on the teacher and learners
- encouraging teachers to experiment with new ideas in their own teaching, and see how this impacts on themselves and learners.

Conclusion

This case study of one teacher is, of course, extremely limited in its scope, and its findings cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, it has shown that the effects of a teacher education course are extremely complex, and that we can only begin to really grasp these complexities by working closely with teachers taking courses in order to explore the ways in which their beliefs, thinking and teaching are influenced by such courses. The findings of the study have shown that DELTA did make a difference by improving the teacher's confidence and awareness, and stimulating a greater depth of understanding of her beliefs and teaching. It would seem that the most important factors which helped this learning were a focus on beliefs, reflective tasks, individual support and guidance, teaching practice cycles, peer observations and demo activities. It is hoped that further studies of this nature will help us better understand teacher learning and enable us to further improve the provision of teacher education courses, such as DELTA, worldwide.

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Setting international standards for teaching

MONICA POULTER ASSESSMENT AND OPERATIONS GROUP

The challenge

Throughout the forty year period that the teaching awards have been administered, first by the RSA and then by UCLES EFL/Cambridge ESOL, a major preoccupation has been to ensure the reliability of teaching assessment across the range of centres offering the courses. This was a relatively simple matter when there were only a few UK-based centres but has become more complex now that more than 250 centres across the world are involved in direct assessment of the teaching of around 12,000 candidates a year. The majority of the teaching assessment is conducted by course tutors. Their judgements are of course monitored and moderated by Cambridge ESOL but tutors carry the main responsibility for grading and reporting on teaching competence. Where teaching assessment includes external, as well as internal, assessment of teaching, the outcome should be the same no matter who is conducting the assessment. It is, however, not uncommon for two people watching the same event to have different perspectives of that event. For example, one tutor may praise a teacher's classroom management, while another tutor may criticise the same teacher for being too controlling. It is therefore of vital importance that tutors and assessors are provided with opportunities to compare and discuss their judgements in relation to examples of teaching and for these judgements to be standardised. Weak and strong lessons are not at issue but many of the lessons observed by centres and assessors will display both strengths and weaknesses and in these cases the focus of standardisation has to be on what constitutes the 'tipping point' – where a *Pass* becomes a *Fail*.

Teaching practice cannot be re-run or re-marked so it is of paramount importance that the written record of the observation is accurate and transparent and supports the grade awarded by the tutor/assessor. Tutor assessor training has therefore to include a key focus on how to record the lesson observation with reference to the published criteria. These records of teaching assessment allow the moderators to check that the final grade awarded is a fair overall outcome.

The procedures

Initial training

All trainers have to meet minimal professional requirements and to participate in a programme of training and induction

before working independently on courses and undertaking individual assessments. This training includes joint observations of teaching practice. Trainer training guidelines, briefing packs and standardisation videos are provided by Cambridge ESOL to support the training. External assessors also undergo initial training with a suitably experienced assessor. This includes joint observation of a lesson and a check on the assessor's report writing and recording skills.

The Assessment Scheme

All teaching awards which include a teaching practice component include external moderation and/or assessment of teaching. Joint observation of some teaching is part of the course moderation procedure for all the certificate awards.

Standardisation meetings

Since the establishment of the teaching awards, regular standardisation meetings have been held for tutors/assessors in the UK and regional meetings have been conducted by Joint Chief Assessors. These meetings have provided much valued opportunities for standardisation using filmed lessons and have also provided a platform for professional exchange and for raising queries.

Packs of standardisation materials have been made available for those unable to attend a meeting. Assessors using these packs are able to match their own judgement against a standardised feedback sheet, but such activity lacks the professional development which occurs when views can be aired and ideas exchanged.

Problems of reach and accessibility

With the rapid growth of centres in the last decade, the logistics of organising standardisation meetings have become more challenging. The distances between centres and the time needed to travel to and from and to attend meetings make them impractical for a large number of centres. Furthermore, there was little evidence that those who attended meetings on behalf of their centre managed, in spite of good intentions and materials being made available, to cascade the training for the benefit of other tutors at their centre.

Last year it was decided to explore the possibility of offering tutor/assessor training through Moodle, a readily

available and easy to use virtual learning environment. The aim was to establish a community of practice which can be accessed by all centres. The first online session for CELTA tutors/assessors took place in February this year and by the end of 2007, eight sessions will have taken place with sessions for other awards to follow.

Online standardisation – the process

Step 1: A DVD of the lesson, lesson plan and materials and details of standardisation dates were circulated to centres at the end of 2006. Centres were asked to set up standardisation sessions as part of staff training at the centre and to record the centre's grade for the lesson and key points for feedback on the feedback proforma provided.

Step 2: One person per centre then registered for one of the advertised standardisation sessions. Participants were put together in groups of 3 or 4 before the session start date.

Step 3: The online standardisation took place. Sessions were organised over a five day period which involved completion of tasks by set times during the week. Standardisation included the following compulsory activities:

- logging of centre grades for the lesson plan and lesson
- participation in group work to discuss and agree feedback on the lesson
- reading and commenting on postings of other groups
- completion of a quiz on administration procedures.

A Chief Assessor was available to respond to questions and queries and to liaise with participants whose grading was out of line with the agreed standard. A Cambridge ESOL administrator was available throughout to deal with technical or Moodle orientation problems and a Subject Officer was involved to deal with assessment queries or course delivery issues.

Step 4: At the end of the session the standardisation pack was posted for participants to download and print.

Step 5: Evaluation forms were completed and sent back by participants.

Step 6: Certificates of participation were issued to those who had fully participated and a fee paid to assessors (as for face-to-face meetings).

In addition to the above, a number of optional activities were set up. These were:

- a wiki to which ideas on how to avoid stress could be added
- a glossary of teaching practice feedback strategies to which participants could contribute
- a forum to discuss lesson planning support
- a discussion forum to discuss appropriate intervention by the trainer.

The evaluations

The feedback on the sessions was largely very positive, particularly and understandably from those who had not previously had access to group meetings. The majority of participants enjoyed the contact with other participants.

'We're especially isolated here so it was great to chat with people I've never met before'.

'Meeting colleagues albeit through the ether – the biggest benefit for me was seeing the feedback and observations from other centres.'

The majority stated that they would not have wanted to work through the materials individually – which would have been an option.

'The group work was extremely useful. It confirmed for me that I was on the right track. I felt much better about giving my ideas to the whole group following group work.'

'Group work is important because it helps to see what others are thinking and opens another dimension of dialogue which can flow in useful directions depending on the individuals' needs and questions in the group. Personally, I find the open forums a little intimidating as I have had a lot less experience than many others. I did, however, enjoy reading others' comments. I guess it is like pair checking before you have to give feedback in a class. It really built my confidence. Please do not get rid of the small group idea.'

As with some face-to-face meetings some people failed to 'turn up' and this was problematic where tasks depended on contact. A few participants found the group work less useful than others and this seems to have depended on how well the group bonded and engaged with the tasks. Some groups clearly gained a tremendous amount from the process and appreciated:

'... the 'pyramid' shape of the activity, i.e. that we worked on the tasks as a centre, fed back to another group and had to come up with an answer that had been discussed and evaluated by a number of trainers.'

Another participant stated:

'I liked the fact that I had already seen the DVD of the lesson and had time to discuss ideas with colleagues before the Moodle site went live.'

For a number of participants the experience was the first time they had participated in online training and they appreciated the learning opportunity this gave them. Participants' previous experience of online activity was a major factor in determining how easy it was for them to navigate round the site. Most of these who did have difficulty ended by acknowledging that they thought the problem lay 'in their own heads' and that guide had been very useful. The Guide to using Moodle was adapted as we progressed through sessions to take on board difficulties that some participants, new to online learning environments, had encountered.

Inevitably, some participants regretted the replacement of face-to-face sessions with online training. However, most participants could see the benefits.

'Quite exciting to see so many folk from so many different places able to connect together. Nevertheless, a bit cold. It was a positive experience... (but) did miss the vibe and atmosphere of a 'human' session!'

'I missed seeing people but this is a way forward with such a big spread of centres and we can link up with others.'

'Of course, it's not like being present in a meeting face-to-face, but I thought this online simulation was a close second.'

The biggest problem encountered was finding time to fit the training in. If a training day is set up for a face-to-face

meeting, the tutor or assessor has a day away from the centre dedicated to the training. Fitting in online tasks was problematic for some people especially where computers were shared with other members of staff. However, the evaluations included a number of suggestions for helping participants to manage their time and these have been taken on board for future standardisation sessions – for example, alerting participants ahead of the session start date that there are set times to complete tasks so that they can organise the time appropriately in the week ahead.

However, in spite of some difficulty in getting through the tasks in the time available, most participants were reassured by the process and enjoyed feeling part of a CELTA community of practice. This was especially the case for centres who are geographically distant from other centres or who have little contact outside a small regional network.

'I've always had faith in CELTA but this was increased by the consensus I found we largely had – nice to know we're thinking along the right lines.'

'It's nice to see the majority have the same/similar opinions.'

'Great way of knowing what's happening elsewhere in the CELTA world!'

The benefits – a summary

On balance there would appear to be far more positives than negatives:

- Online standardisation sessions are accessible to all centres.
- The groups allow trainers from many different parts of the world to communicate with trainers from outside their area for the first time and to develop links with trainers and assessors within country.
- All group members have an equal chance to participate. Lurkers can be identified and gently encouraged to join in.
- Participants who are out of line are able to access the postings of other groups and can get a clear sense of where their perspective differs.
- Late comers can catch up on discussions.
- Discussions are written down so there is a record of contributions which can be printed off at the end of the

session for use for further training, sharing with colleagues etc.

- The optional activities allow for professional exchange of ideas and strategies which can be collated and shared with all centres.
- Resources are used to better effect to reach a greater number of people.
- The online training experience can be valuable CPD for some participants.
- Travel time and carbon emissions are reduced.

Lessons for the future

The feedback provided by participants has been enormously helpful. In future, options will be provided for whole day online sessions so that participants can set aside a few hours as they would for a face-to-face session as synchronous discussion will be included in some sessions. This was requested by a significant minority. It will also be possible for individuals to work through the materials on their own if they prefer to do the exercise as an individual – though the majority of participants favoured the group work and felt the activities would have been of far less value without it.

Feedback from courses to date has allowed us to make amendments which have already addressed some of the difficulties encountered by early participants. Participants are now given access to the site a few days in advance of the start so that they can familiarise themselves with the site, up-load their photo, post an introduction and get started on non-compulsory activities. The site is also left open for a week after the official session has finished so that participants can re-visit, review postings and print off anything of value.

The move to online standardisation has been a learning experience for all concerned. We look forward to the challenges of providing even better online training for all teaching awards as we refine and develop procedures and explore the potential of the technological resources available.

Communities of practice and teacher education: the contribution of the CELTA trainer training programme

JO-ANN DELANEY TOWER HAMLETS COLLEGE, LONDON

Introduction

In their book *Situated Learning: legitimate peripheral participation*, Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a model of learning for a vocational context where learners are learning to 'be' a particular profession or 'community of practice'. In this model learners **participate** in activities and this **participation** gradually allows legitimacy of the role to be conferred upon them. Lave and Wenger are clear that their work is a description of learning and is not meant to describe the means of implementing or 'operationalising' it for educational purposes; nevertheless their notions of 'community of practice' and 'legitimate peripheral participation' have potential relevance for the world of teacher education.

This article reports on research examining the extent to which certain aspects of these two notions operate in a scheme for teacher trainer education designed by Cambridge ESOL teaching awards and implemented in centres running the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) teacher training course. The community of practice in this case is a specific group of teacher trainers engaged in the shared enterprise of delivering training on CELTA courses and drawing on shared experience through the training programme.

Communities of practice

The concept of 'communities of practice' is exemplified by Lave and Wenger (1991) through a number of case studies showing individuals learning to be/take on a particular role. Wenger (1998) develops the concept further in *Communities of Practice; Learning, Meaning and Identity*. The community becomes a set of practices in which individuals engage and learning is engaging in enterprises together, interacting with each other and with the world.

Legitimate peripheral participation

Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) is defined as the 'learning of knowledgeable skills', i.e. learning to *be* a member of an existing community of practice. Such learning occurs through participants' participation in the typical activities of the expert or 'old timer/master' group. Through their participation, 'newcomers' gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community, i.e. what the everyday tasks are like, how the experts conduct themselves and what learning needs to be undertaken in order to become full participants. The relationships between those involved in participation are crucial to the success of the learning experience. Exchanges

between 'peers' or 'near peers' are also highlighted as a probable condition for the effectiveness of learning.

Another aspect of LPP is engagement with the 'technologies' of the profession. These can include actual physical machineries, or they can refer to discourse, i.e. learning to speak as a full member of the community. One activity that helps newcomers use relevant discourse is the exchange of 'war stories' where peers and masters discuss previous experience including, and most importantly, examples of where something went wrong.

Case studies of how LPP works in practice identify a number of key stages of the learning process. The first is an observational stage where the newcomer watches the activities of the profession but does not participate. The newcomer then takes on various tasks of the profession, usually learning the less demanding tasks first. They go on to engage in dialogue with peers, near peers and experts, continuing to observe and assemble their ideas of what constitutes the practice of the community.

The remainder of this article considers the trainer-in-training programme as an example of legitimate peripheral participation.

Using CELTA as part of a trainer-in-training programme

The Cambridge ESOL Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) is a pre-service teacher training award for teachers of English as a second language. Candidates for the award need to participate in a Cambridge ESOL approved course delivered by trainers who have demonstrated that they have the requisite knowledge and skill. In order to become a trainer, good teaching skills are considered necessary but not sufficient; all new trainers are therefore required to participate in a trainer training programme, which is monitored by Cambridge ESOL. Implicit in this training requirement is the belief that teachers and teacher trainers belong to different communities of practice and that additional skills and knowledge are needed in order for a teacher to become a legitimate member of the trainer community. The Cambridge ESOL Training and Induction/Handbook, which is issued to CELTA centres, contains a list of teacher training skills and competencies which the new trainer needs to acquire in order to fulfil the training role.

Typically, a CELTA trainer-in-training shadows an entire course, observing at least two experienced trainers (masters) delivering all elements and gradually participating as a learner-trainer in the two main elements of the course: delivering input (taught) sessions and supervising teaching

practice groups (consisting of 3 or 4 trainee teachers). The CELTA trainees share delivery of a teaching session, observe each other teach and then participate in a feedback session led by the trainer, whose role is to guide them towards awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons taught and to identify areas for development for each trainee.

Research project

The aims of the research project undertaken here were to:

1. Investigate the common features of examples of the trainer training process to identify whether there were features in common with Lave and Wenger's LPP model.
2. Evaluate which aspects of LPP contributed to effective learning to *be* a trainer and how legitimacy was conferred.
3. Draw conclusions as to how LPP could be more formally implemented in trainer training and perhaps in teacher training.

Methodology

A number of trainers who had participated in the CELTA trainer training programme and were currently in the training role were involved in the research. The experience of the training programmes of seven different centres was included in the research. Although Cambridge ESOL specifies that a training programme should be in place and produces guidelines, each centre designs an individual programme, and the number of experienced trainers (masters) and other trainers (near peers) engaging with the new comer varies.

The use of a semi-structured interview to start the research process was felt to have advantages particularly in terms of flexibility (Denscombe 1998:189). Five trainers (identified as trainer 1–5) were involved in the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1 for Interview Questions.) Trainers were at different time-distances from their participation in a trainer-training programme and an interview provided interviewees with the opportunity to explore, elaborate and evaluate their experience in response to the questions. The interview format also allowed the interviewer to make links between the themes discussed (learning, relationships, discourse and legitimacy) and the individual trainer training experience of the five trainers.

The semi-structured interviews produced qualitative data. This was important since the research examined aspects of individuals' learning and it was vital that 'meanings and the way people understand things' were allowed to emerge (Tesch 1990, cited in Denscombe 1998:267). However, there were certain drawbacks in the scope of the project and the spread of evidence. Availability of trainers for extensive interviews meant that only a small number of trainers were able to contribute.

Once the key features of the learning model for the trainer training programme had been identified through the interviews, it was possible to test out the findings in a closed questionnaire (see Appendix 2). The questions focused mainly on learning and asked trainers to evaluate

through ranking and allocating number values to aspects of their experience. Fourteen additional trainers responded to the questionnaire.

Main findings

The interviews with those who had participated in a CELTA trainer training programme show clear implementation (operationalising) of Lave and Wenger's description of LPP:

- trainers-in-training engage in observation of old-timers/masters delivering input and giving feedback to assemble knowledge about the role of a CELTA trainer
- they engage in dialogue with near peers/masters/old-timers about the tasks involved in being a trainer and, in particular, the "war stories" about previous difficult trainees
- the activities of observing and active involvement are both rated highly in terms of quality of learning
- dialogue with near peers is identified as key to learning
- the learning of discourse and, in particular, terminology is viewed as important to becoming a legitimate member of the community of practice.

Findings from the interviews and questionnaire (see Table 1) suggest four key areas to consider in terms of the way learning is made effective and the potential to extrapolate practice for further implementation. These areas are:

1. the interaction between observation and participation and how each was seen as valuable in contributing to full conferring of legitimacy of the role
2. the role of relationships and dialogue in learning. This includes relationships with tutors and fellow trainers in training

Table 1: Results from the questionnaire

Statement	No. agree	No. disagree
a. I tended to imitate the tutors I observed doing input and giving feedback when it came to my turn to do it	12	2
b. I learned more from the tutors I liked and respected more	9	5
c. Before I started the trainer-in training programme I thought input would be more difficult than giving feedback	8	6
d. I learned more from the informal conversations in the staff room than I did from some of the more structured learning opportunities of the trainer-in-training programme	9	5
e. In our informal discussions the experienced tutors discussed situations on previous courses and how to handle them	13	1
f. I would have liked to have had some taught sessions about being a CELTA trainer as part of the trainer-in-training programme	4	10
g. I learned new language and discourse on the trainer-in-training programme to talk about training and the role of the trainer	8	6
h. I believe that being a teacher trainer is different to being a teacher	11	3

3. the importance of learning 'new' discourse to be able to operate as a full member of the community of practice
4. the importance of further learning when a learner becomes a full participant.

The interaction between observation and participation

In all five examples, observation was seen as an important learning experience (see Figure 1). In fact, observing Teaching Practice rated highest as a learning experience. For Trainer 1 the main advantage was seeing a 'different model of feedback'. For Trainer 2 it was an opportunity to copy a particular style when giving input, but which she then realised 'wasn't me' and led to her devising her own individual style. For Trainer 3, observation was key to seeing how to handle potentially difficult feedback sessions and 'a lot of learning was in the observations'. However, for both Trainer 4 and Trainer 5, observations of input were effective but were also intimidating. Trainer 5 went as far as to describe the activity as 'disempowering' because she was watching practitioners of such a high standard that she felt she would not be able to perform at the same level.

The feedback indicated strongly that a careful balance needs to be in place between the amount and timing of observation and participation to ensure that learning is maximised. Too long spent observing without the opportunity to participate has a negative impact on learning. Trainer 5 contrasted her own experience as a trainee in Teaching Practice, where she was observing but also participating from an early stage, with her experience of observing input as a trainer-in-training where she did not participate until about half way through the course. 'They waited too long before I was put on the spot to start performing'. Trainer 2 also mentioned the long period of being 'silent' as a negative aspect and would like to have participated from an earlier stage. In fact, three of the respondents to the questionnaire wrote additional comments about how they would like to have participated more at an earlier stage. One said that in ranking the activities in terms of learning he ranked the observing elements higher, but is certain he would have ranked the participatory ones higher if he had had more opportunity to participate.

In all the interviews it was clear that the view held by the trainer-in-training of the person they were observing was key to the effectiveness of observation as a learning experience. Trainer 3 tended to imitate less the tutor who did not put so much preparation into input sessions. Trainer 2 identified one of the tutors as being less experienced and then had less respect for her. 'I felt I learned less from her despite the fact that she was doing (input) more like the way I would do it'. Trainer 1 also identified a tutor that she felt was less engaging and from whom she learned considerably less. Trainer 4 commented that 'respect for the tutor made me learn more'.

The role of relationships and dialogue in learning

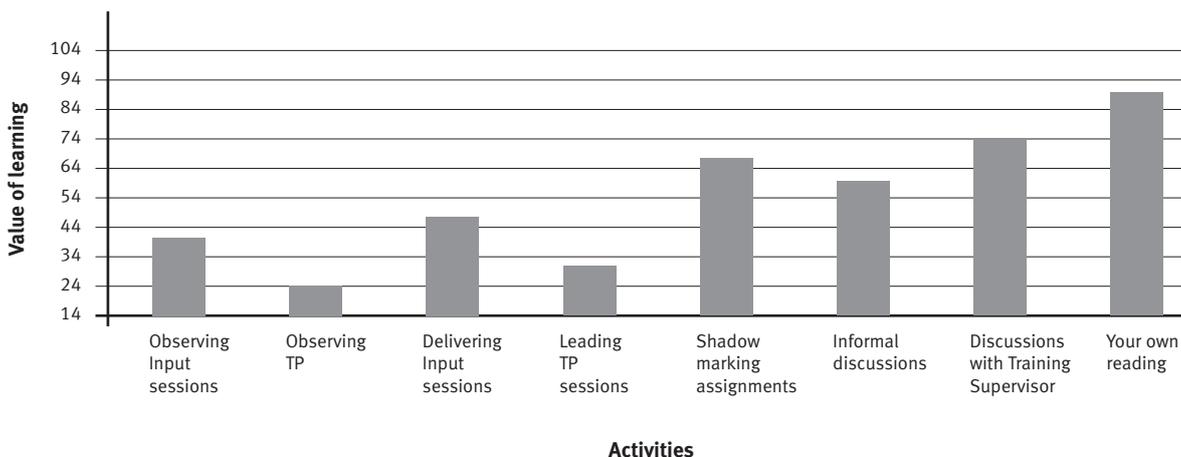
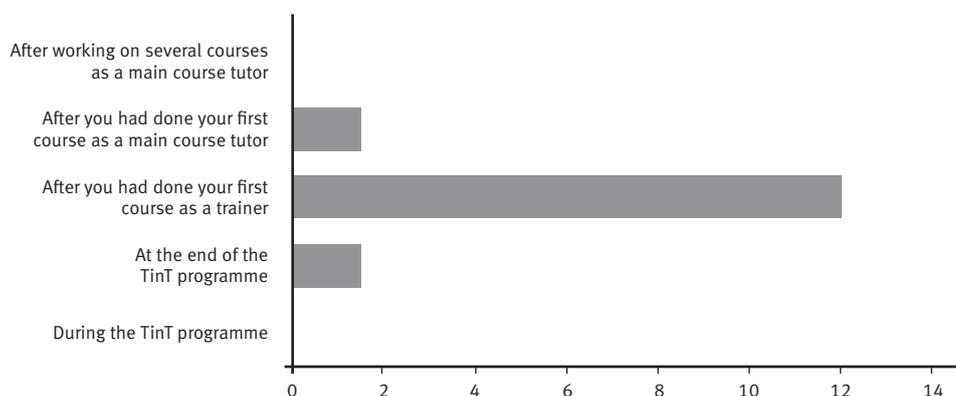
In all cases dialogue was one of the key drivers of learning. Trainer 2's experience was that most learning centred on issues related to giving feedback. 'I remember discussions about how you can ruin somebody's life by giving poor feedback and I will always remember that'. In Trainer 1's programme there were discussions about 'case studies from other courses and what you would do if...'. Trainer 3 experienced 'a lot of interaction about difficulties of managing progress and trainees' problems'. Two of those interviewed followed a training programme where there were two trainers-in-training. In the interview, they both raised this independently as an important aspect of their learning. Trainer 3 stated that 'peer' interaction played a vital role in identifying how to behave as a CELTA trainer. Trainer 4 could not remember much about dialogues with the tutors, but stated that she had 'lots of discussion with the other trainer-in-training' and 'this was important in learning how to structure input and handle TP'. Views expressed by the interviewees about the experienced tutors suggest a respect and an admiration that may actually interfere with purposeful dialogue. With near peers, it is possible to discuss and take risks in making comments that may not be completely acceptable as a full member of the discourse community. Trainer 5, who followed an individual programme, suggested that she would have benefited from training alongside another trainer-in-training and having opportunities for peer discussion as she felt that at times her lack of experience prevented her from joining in the staff room dialogue.

The importance of learning 'new' discourse

All trainers-in-training interviewed were able to identify new discourse they learned that was important to their full participation. This was partly substantiated by those who completed the questionnaire, where 8 out of 14 felt they learned new discourse (see Table 1). For Trainer 1 much of this involved learning new 'terminology' and different ways of talking about teaching and learning, terms such as 'language grading' and 'handing over'. Trainer 2 and Trainer 4 both identified the discourse around giving feedback as important learning. Trainer 4 described learning 'ways of saying things' particularly in handling feedback where the discourse involved making suggestions rather than judgements and using language to lead trainees to make conclusions rather than giving them all the answers. In a very insightful anecdote, Trainer 2 described a recent experience in the staff room discussing an aspect of her current CELTA course with another experienced trainer. Another member of staff (not a CELTA trainer) commented that although she had been listening carefully she had 'not understood what they were discussing'. Her lack of access to the discourse of a trainer had prevented this.

Figure 1: Perceived value of learning activities on the teacher in training programme

Activities were rated 1–8 (1 being the most valuable). The *best possible score* is therefore 14 and the worst rated activity would score a maximum of 112

**Figure 2: Stage at which trainers felt they were fully in the role of CELTA trainer**

The importance of further learning when a learner becomes a full participant

In the responses to the questionnaire, 13 out of 14 trainers said that they only considered themselves to be a CELTA trainer when they had taken responsibility for a course (see Figure 2). This was supported by the trainers interviewed. In describing their learning on the trainer-in-training programme, all interviewees were extremely positive about the learning programme. Comments such as ‘excellent training’, ‘very rewarding’ were frequent. However, it is clear that following a training programme to prepare for the role is just the starting point and that considerably more learning took place for each trainer as they began to participate fully in the role of course tutor. Trainer 5 commented that it was only after working on three courses that she felt she had developed her own style.

Other findings

Some other interesting aspects of the training programme were highlighted by the interviewees and supported by the questionnaires. The role of more formal teaching was not

seen as very important. Formal activities such as reading, discussions with the training supervisor and shadow marking all rated as low on the scale of effective learning (see Figure 1). When asked whether they would have liked some formal teaching on the trainer-in-training programme, only 4 out of 14 replied yes (see Table 1). One added that this would have been more beneficial at a later stage. This is supported by Trainer 5 in her interview. She described the possibility of having some additional taught sessions and stated that these would have been more helpful at a later stage when she would have been better able to reflect.

The use of case studies (“war stories”) is a common aspect of the trainer-in-training programme and is part of the dialogue that contributes to learning. All but one of the respondents to the questionnaire said that discussing previous courses and trainees was a feature of the dialogues between experienced trainers and trainers in training. The interviewees commented on the use of case studies to focus particularly on difficult situations. Trainer 3 described how on her training course there were some difficult trainees and that tutors referred to previous situations to clarify ways of handling these more challenging situations.

Implications and recommendations for training

The experiences of the trainers involved in the research indicate that when learning is related to 'knowing how', the features of LPP are an effective starting point on the journey to the role of a fully fledged member of the community of practice. Many of the skills described constitute 'soft' knowledge and it is acknowledged that for a group of trainers-in-training with an already considerable amount of 'hard' knowledge about teaching, it is likely to be easier for LPP to be effective. Assessment of the effectiveness of the programme is based on evidence of 'doing' (supervision of feedback and delivering input) and this further facilitates the LPP model. It is possible, however, to draw some general conclusions on features that could enhance other training programmes.

The balance between formal learning, observation and participation

Trainer training programmes (where they exist) and indeed teacher training programmes are generally structured with a considerable amount of formal learning (often lectures) before actual participation is required. The research here indicates that early participation actually enhances learning. A recommendation would be that trainer training and teacher training have a balance of both with early opportunities for participation.

The role of the 'master'

It is clear from this research that having an 'expert' practitioner both to observe and to engage in dialogue plays an important role in learning. Not every area of teacher education has a ready bank of experts to observe. The monitoring role played by Cambridge ESOL in ensuring that potential trainers participate in a training programme, are supported in the early stages of their work as a trainer and have significant experience before training up others, is extremely important in ensuring the quality of the experience of trainers-in-training.

The role of the peer

This research has shown that much learning to become a full member of a role occurs through exchange with peers. Opportunities to engage in such exchanges are offered through the training process but also through standardisation activities provided by Cambridge ESOL teaching awards.

Further research

The scope of this study is small and the first suggestion would be to extend it to include more trainers. There is a large body of trainers who have participated in CELTA trainer and training programmes all over the world and commonalities across cultures could also be explored. It would also be of value to conduct a longitudinal study in which trainers were followed up over their first few courses

and their learning from their work as independent trainers was examined.

Conclusion

The research undertaken here examined a particular training programme to see if the model of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) could indeed be implemented or 'operationalised'. It was found that many elements of LPP were indeed evident in CELTA trainer-training programmes. Activities that form part of the LPP model contributed to learning to *be* a teacher trainer. Cambridge ESOL has a number of guidelines in place to ensure the success of the model, including the monitoring of trainer experience and expertise and the formalisation of a training process that in other areas may happen ad hoc, or not at all.

The research presented here does suggest further areas of development of these programmes. There are currently no specific guidelines as to the balance of observation and practice and this has emerged as an important learning issue. There is also no encouragement in the trainer approval process for potential trainers to train in pairs. Findings here suggest that this can be an extremely valuable element of the training experience. Finally, the CELTA trainer-training programmes do not have wide recognition or currency outside the Cambridge ESOL teaching awards structure. It may be time to consider the validation of the programme so that it becomes a trainer training award and that the success of the programme as a learning experience is more formally recognised.

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APPENDIX 1: Questions for semi-structured interview with trainers-in-training

1. Describe the process of training (how long ago, length of programme, tasks, process, who involved, pre trainer-in-training experience of training)
2. Participation: describe how you participated as a trainer throughout the programme (move from observing to doing)
3. Learning 1: For each activity described in 1 + 2 try to evaluate when the learning occurred – doing v observing, role of feedback from trainees (non peers), fellow trainers

- (peers/near peers), training supervisor (old timer)
4. Relationships 1: Describe how you interacted with each of the people involved in the training, try to remember dialogues about the role and about the 'doing' of the role
 5. Relationships 2: Describe your relationship with the other people involved in the training (awe, respect, admiration, dislike, lack of respect)
 6. Learning 2: What do you feel you had learned by the end of the programme? How has that learning continued since the end of the programme?
 7. Discourse: Describe how you learned the 'language' to discuss the role with your near peers. What aspects of the language were different to that used as a teacher?
 8. Conferring of legitimacy: When did you feel you were a qualified trainer? How did you know?
 9. Teaching: Was there any overt teaching on the programme? Would you have liked more?
 10. Evaluate the programme as a learning experience.

APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire

1. *How long ago did you undertake your trainer-in-training programme? (please tick)*
 - Less than 2 years ago
 - Between 2–6 years ago
 - More than 6 years ago
2. *Who was involved in your trainer-in-training programme?*
 - Course tutors only yes/no
 - Course tutors and additional training supervisor yes/no
 - Other trainers-in-training yes/no
3. *Rank (rate) the activities below (1–8) in terms of how much you learned about being a CELTA trainer through engaging in them. (1 is the most learning)*
 - Observing input sessions
 - Observing TP
 - Delivering input sessions
 - Leading TP sessions
 - Shadow marking assignments
 - Informal discussions with course tutors
 - Discussions with training supervisor (if applicable)
 - Your own reading
4. *When did you feel you could say that you were a CELTA trainer? (please tick)*
 - During the trainer-in-training programme
 - At the end of the trainer-in-training programme
 - After you had done your first course as a trainer
 - After you had done your first course as a main course tutor
 - After working on several courses as a main course tutor
5. *Please say whether you agree/disagree with the following statements*
 - a. I tended to imitate the tutors I observed doing input and giving feedback when it came to my turn to do it.
 - b. I learned more from the tutors I liked and respected more
 - c. Before I started the trainer-in-training programme I thought input would be more difficult than giving feedback
 - d. I learned more from the informal conversations in the staff room than I did from some of the more structured learning opportunities of the trainer-in-training programme
 - e. In our informal discussions the experienced tutors discussed situations on previous courses and how to handle them
 - f. I would have liked to have had some taught sessions about being a CELTA trainer as part of the trainer-in-training programme
 - g. I learned new language and discourse on the trainer-in-training programme to talk about training and the role of the trainer
 - h. I believe that being a teacher trainer is different to being a teacher.

ICELT and PEP Ukraine: evaluation of a reflective ESP teacher development programme

DAVID WATKINS BRITISH COUNCIL, UKRAINE

Introduction

This article provides an overview of an attempt to initiate and introduce change to the existing English language teaching practices at seven higher educational institutions in Ukraine through the setting up of a reflective teacher development programme within a local Ministry and using the Cambridge ICELT (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching) training award as a cornerstone of the change process.

The situation prior to the introduction of the course and teacher development programme is examined, including the reasons why ICELT was chosen and how the course fits into the training model. The article goes on to evaluate the

results of the programme to date, three years since its introduction. It concludes by outlining the main issues, achievements and lessons we have learnt.

Background to the Peacekeeping English Project (PEP) in Ukraine

Ukraine is a country of 48.5 million people which achieved full independence in 1991 shortly after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Although politically divided between the broadly Russian speaking east and pro-western (and predominantly Ukrainian speaking) west of the country, in fact the country has for a number of years followed a

policy of tacit 'Euro-Atlantic integration' in many government spheres including the military with the Ukrainian Armed Forces committing troops to NATO missions and participating in NATO-mandated exercises.

The Peacekeeping English Project (currently active in 23 countries worldwide) is funded by the UK Government Global Conflict Prevention Fund (MoD, FCO, DFID), managed by the British Council and aims to promote the English Language training of UN civilian, military and police peacekeeping personnel worldwide. In Ukraine this is realised amongst other operations through the effective teacher training of local teachers in seven Ministry of Defence Institutes where officers take specialised intensive courses prior to and following international peacekeeping missions and exercises. The ultimate aim of the Ukrainian PEP Project is to achieve local sustainability in all our current operations including teacher training.

The institutes and our teacher training operations on the ground

To an outsider, Ukrainian military institutes closely resemble small UK universities with the 'students' (military cadets) following one of a number of faculty courses and English taken as a compulsory subject for the first four years of the mandatory five-year course. In addition, 'post-graduate' courses are organised for officers including specialised courses in English. These courses usually last three to four months and are organised by the local Department of Foreign Languages which typically employs around 15–25 teachers of English.

Since 2001, PEP Ukraine has employed between three and four UK-employed trainers based in the institutes and responsible for conducting weekly training sessions to local institute teachers, as well as occasionally organising longer and more specialised course (e.g., in testing, self-access learning) to meet local and specific needs as they arise. Although based in Kyiv, Sevastopol and Lviv (see Figure 1), the three current trainers also conduct outreach visits to other regional institutes (Odesa, Kharkiv, Zhytomyr); since 2005 the Kyiv-based Project Manager has also assumed responsibility for the training of teachers in neighbouring Moldova.

Figure 1: Map of Ukraine and the location of PEP Ukraine operations



Background to the local teaching and learning context

As a result of the sheer speed and scale of change in Ukraine since independence it is fair to say that systems and teaching practices at institutes have generally failed to keep up with the entirely new set of demands and language skills required of graduating and serving military officers participating in modern day international peacekeeping exercises. Therefore, in terms of organising an effective local and national teacher training programme, the situation greeting the new UK-appointed trainers in 2001 can be summarised as below:

- The absence of a coordinated host INSETT (in-service teacher training) programme for ministry teachers. Sessions when they did occur tended to be led by the institute Head of Department and to focus almost exclusively on administrative rather than developmental issues.
- No host funding available for teacher training. When teachers were chosen for international or national teacher training events, their courses, travel etc. were on the whole completely funded by the UK sponsored PEP Project.
- No officially recognised posts for local teacher trainers (the very concept of 'teacher training' doesn't translate well into the local Ukrainian/Russian languages).
- A high proportion of 'content' rather than 'skills' based lessons delivered at the institutes usually relying on grammar-translation type methodology and employing a high amount of L1/L2 translation. Thus there was a large discrepancy between the practices employed by teachers and the actual language needs of officers and cadets who, when participating in international exercises and conferences, first and foremost needed to communicate confidently (if imperfectly) with their international colleagues.
- Little or no INSETT support for younger teachers who graduate from university in Ukraine with generally high level English skills but having received relatively little methodological input and real classroom practice.
- Little perceived local need for INSETT training even among younger teachers – the underlying assumption being that 'if you know English, then (through translation), you can teach it!'
- Minimal observation of new and experienced members of staff with most observations being used to 'hire or fire' new teachers.
- Low salaries and the lack of possibilities for teachers to earn more by progressing up the existing career structure, meaning that teacher training remained a low priority for teachers keen to supplement their income by giving extra private lessons at home.

Early optimism

Given the above, in addition to initiatives aimed at promoting changes at higher levels (creating a national testing team, initiating a book-writing project), teacher training was seen as an activity with high impact and strong multiplier potential and, given in 2001 the absence of much

ongoing activity in this sphere, gave rise to considerable early hope and optimism.

Lasting impact of initial teacher training initiatives?

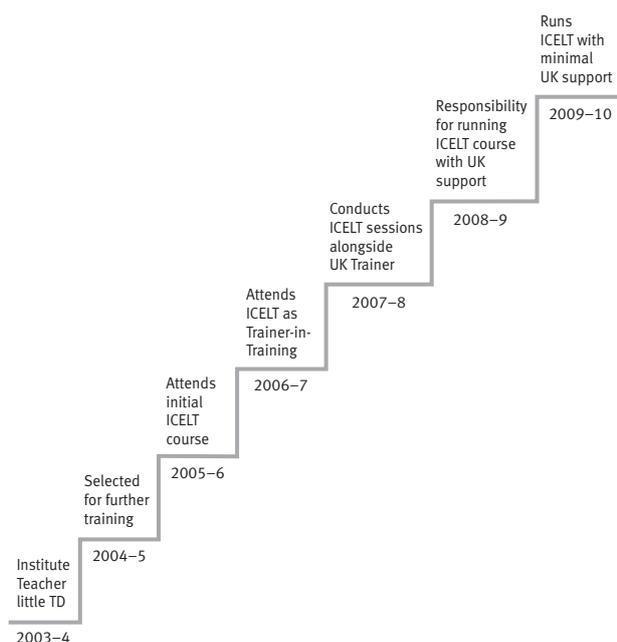
Despite the initial hopes expressed above and despite the UK trainers running regular sessions at institutes over a number of years, by November 2003 it was clear that the overall effect of existing operations in changing current practices was negligible. Although this was in part due to the absence of local management of INSETT programmes (with regular training sessions incorporated into teachers' regular working schedules), it was also noted that there were less obvious factors involved. These included the fact that:

- While UK-trainer sessions were often seen as 'useful' from a linguistic point of view ('a chance to improve one's English') they were not generally perceived as relevant to the teachers' specific classes.
- The two-hour long weekly sessions didn't have the potential to radically change the way teachers perceive their day-to-day practice. Oleg Tarnopolsky (2004), quoting from the Ukrainian context, suggests that the giving of such sessions in such a way has more or less the same effect as 'cavalry attacks on a fortress that can be taken only after a long siege'.
- Lots of techniques 'and recipes were presented for the participants to follow but no help in developing ideas and materials of their own' (Tomlinson). Thus teachers struggled to take anything personal away from the regular sessions.
- While the UK trainers generally encouraged teachers to, or assumed that teachers were able to, perceive links between the training room and their specific ESP lessons, in practice most sessions were 'content-oriented' (e.g. to give the participants information about TPR) rather than 'behavioural' (e.g. to help the participants to work out ways of using the principles of TPR in their context) (Tomlinson) and delivered by an external observer at times distant from the day-to-day reality of teaching de-motivated cadets and low-level officers. In essence therefore there was very little effective link-up between training input and practice and Duff's (1988) requisites for change that 'training should be practical and directly applicable to the working context' were clearly not always present.
- Teachers' opinions about the UK trainers' ability to relate to the real teaching situation were partly justified on the grounds that the trainers weren't allowed to teach classes for security reasons with only periodical 'demo' lessons officially sanctioned. Thus genuine doubts about whether the British Council trainers could 'practice what they preached to teach' lingered on.

A change of course

By November 2003 it was decided to review the situation and to find a solution which not only promoted more individual reflection on existing practices but also produced some kind of real impact on the existing INSETT structure. What was needed was a programme which not only led to some form of host sustainability (including the possibility to train up local teachers to become trainers themselves) but also attractive

Figure 2 : PEP Ukraine's Teacher and Trainer Development Ladder 2003–2010



and cheap enough for the local Ukrainian Ministry of Defence to fully support and finance in the longer term. To these ends a teacher training 'ladder' was drawn up with Cambridge ESOL's ICELT course and syllabus (Cambridge ESOL 2004) chosen as a central rung (see Figure 2).

Why ICELT was chosen as a key element in the new programme

The ICELT course and syllabus was chosen by PEP Ukraine for a number of reasons:

1. Status and an independent external method of assessment and moderation

It was felt that a course leading to a certificate awarded by a prestigious body such as Cambridge ESOL would be attractive not only to individual teacher candidates but to the local Ministry of Defence as well. More succinctly, we felt that our activities would be taken more seriously by all concerned. Although attempts had been made across the PEP Project to conduct internally validated teacher and trainer training programmes, this was the first course to carry with it specific and internationally recognised assessment criteria as well as outside accreditation.

2. A clear and relevant link between theory and local practice

All ICELT language tasks, written assignments and observations are designed so that candidates link their theoretical input and background reading to their everyday classroom practice. The fact that all ICELT tasks present a clear outline while remaining in essence non-prescriptive made them highly appropriate to our situation; in the strongly ESP environment of teaching specialised military English to serving officers we hoped this combination of general task linked to specialised practice would trigger more effective individual teacher reflection on current practice, greater personal ownership of new input received and thus in the long run more lasting impact and change.

3. Language improvement module

The language improvement module option provided by ICELT was also attractive, not because Ukrainian teacher graduates have weak language skills but because of the ‘awareness raising’ potential of the tasks. Many teachers in Ukraine when studying English are intensively exposed to the language for more than 10 years at English language schools and University; this contrasts markedly with the cadets and officers they teach who frequently find themselves having to learn a new language at short notice. As a result, the accuracy-based focus of the tuition that teachers received is often reflected in over-demanding expectations and attitudes to language errors that they bring to the classroom; we hoped that the language awareness element of ICELT would provide a ‘way in’ to getting the teachers to reflect on what is really involved in learning a second language as well as an opportunity to secretly tackle a few rather annoying fossilized examples of ‘Somerset Maugham Russian English’!¹

4. Flexibility

The ICELT course was also sufficiently flexible to cope with our rather specific context situation, allowing us to divide the course into four centrally held input blocks (each of 35 hours each) and enabling the UK trainers to monitor trainees and provide support as roving trainers (including marking most assignments, language tasks and observing teaching practice). Thus practically all practical work was conducted regionally ‘in-house’ with generally two candidates selected per institute.

5. Trainer training potential

Finally the possibility to develop local tutors through ICELT’s trainer-in-training scheme was also attractive as it provided an officially recognised process by which able and willing teachers could train-up as trainers themselves; in addition, it helped us to develop trainers quickly by using the course as a standard model for further courses. Thus, as illustrated in Figure 2, it was envisaged that two promising ICELT candidates would graduate from the first ICELT course in 2005–6, revisit the second ICELT (2006–7) as ICELT trainers-in-training before hopefully going on to train as independent tutors (with initially some UK trainer support) in subsequent courses. While being an ambitious programme, it was necessary for us to develop confident local trainers by the end date of our project (2010–11); basing the trainer training programme on a course that the local ‘trainers’ were familiar with (after one year as candidates themselves and a further year as official Trainers-in-Training) was a good and efficient way of doing this.

Initial fears and expectations

Despite having the benefit of the ESOL Advisor’s visit and the comfort of having the ICELT Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines (Cambridge ESOL 2004) as a framework for the course, it was with a certain amount of uncertainty and

trepidation that we approached selection for the first ICELT course in November 2004. In many ways it was a step into the dark for both us and the institute teachers and certainly the first time that such a course had been attempted in such a way and in this particular part of the world. Specifically the questions that concerned us were the following:

The candidates

- Would the chosen initially UK-financed candidates actually want to do the course, involving as it does considerable extra work at home and having to be observed regularly?
- Would the ICELT candidates actually be able to complete the course? Of particular concern was their ability to write carefully structured lesson plans and to construct assignments with evidence of a clear progression of ideas (as Kelly writes, ‘... each culture group has a different tendency in the organization of writing’ 2003:63).
- Would they really understand the course, its developmental rationale, or simply view it as four 35-hour blocks of ‘unrelated content’ given free of charge by the PEP Project?
- Would any of the candidates emerge as potential future trainers-in-training on subsequent courses and would they want to actually assume this more responsible role?

The course itself

- Would the shift from trainer-led input to a more teacher-centred focus really stimulate teacher reflection on current practices in such a specific context and were the ICELT tasks themselves sufficiently clear to encourage this?
- Would the local Ministry of Defence look on the course favourably enough to ultimately take ownership of it with all the financial implications that that would entail?

Administering and running the course

- How easy would the course be to run and coordinate? On the initial course (2005–6) we had 14 teachers in six locations and five roving tutors. This meant a lot of travel to observe the ICELT candidates and mark scripts as well as having to rely on the candidates to check emails to receive information on the different elements of the course (assignment deadlines etc.). In a country where email is still only a relatively new and affordable concept, would we be able to successfully monitor what was going on hundreds of kilometers away? In running the second course 2006–7 we were faced with the challenge of monitoring ICELT candidates in another country altogether with the inclusion of two candidates from Moldova).
- Given the complications in supporting candidates, would we be able to effectively mark the written work to the required standards? Half of the written scripts need to be double-marked by tutors and we realised at an early stage that this would mean having to trust the less than totally reliable Ukrainian postal service.
- Would the five tutors be able to ‘sing from the same songsheet’ when marking written scripts and grading lessons? Although all the trainers had a number of years’ training experience behind them, only myself as Course

1. Somerset Maugham novels are popular choices for intensive study at many national university linguistic departments in Ukraine and across the former Soviet Union.

Director had proven experience of running previous Cambridge ESOL teacher training courses. Would there be marked discrepancies in grades and marks awarded? Would I be able, as Course Director, to coordinate assessment effectively? Moreover, being located in different institutes meant that though we were more familiar with local circumstances, we had relatively little direct contact with each other. The necessity to rely on mobile phone and email link up became paramount.

Facing the challenges

In order to address the questions and fears above we prepared quite thoroughly for the first course so that in selecting candidates priority was given to teachers with good English and teaching skills; on the advice of the ICELТ Advisor, a significant proportion of the first input block (February 2005) was devoted to sessions which dealt with the rationale behind the course, preparation for the specific Language Tasks (we held a mock presentation of Language Task 1 for example) and sessions giving advice as to how to complete the written tasks to standard.

Moreover, and in addition to the official Cambridge advisory visit, we held a number of pre-course meetings and decided to meet prior to each of the four input blocks to discuss the timetable in detail as well as outstanding issues arising from feedback gained from trainees and fellow trainers.

As Rod Bolitho (2005), recommended, we aimed in fact ‘...to build on the ICELТ participants’ end-of-block feedback keeping in mind that the design of the course on paper is only a starting point, and that the real process of design is ongoing as long as the course is in progress and is constantly being tuned to meet participants’ needs’ (Bolitho 2005:1)

Evaluation of the teacher development programme so far

The candidates and course content

Any fears that we had about the willingness and ability of the ICELТ candidates proved to be completely unsubstantiated with 13 (out of 14) candidates finishing and passing the 2005–6 course and 11 (out of 12) finishing the 2006–7 course in June 2007. Moreover the standard of the written work from the first course was rated high by both the visiting course and Chief Moderators and there were few cases where lesson observations fell below standard.

Where there were problems, they were generally connected with the ability of candidates to correctly interpret the tasks, with a strong tendency for candidates to misread, misinterpret or simply not answer the questions posed and in particular a lack of effective signposting to different parts of the written tasks and assignments. Interestingly, there was a close correlation between this and the way teachers approached the lesson observations, with initially only cursory attention paid to stating specific language and skills aims for the observed lessons; this may be related to the fact that these are not normally required by Heads of Department and frequently not considered

necessary by the teachers themselves when teaching systematically from page to page through the prescribed coursebooks. The difficulty experienced by teachers in stating ‘what exactly they intended to actually teach during a lesson’ remained a thorny issue even up to and during the second course when further sessions had to be added to the timetable to clarify what was expected.

In terms of the impact the courses have had on the teachers themselves, although certain restrictions remain that constrain some teachers’ new-found teaching style, feedback from both courses has indicated that teachers had started to see the benefit of a more learner-centred approach as well as the importance of approaching skills lessons in a different way. Comments on and from the course include:

‘It was the first real boost for my teaching experience and it completely changed my view on teaching.’ (first course participant)

‘At the beginning of the course, I felt my job was to be at the front (of the classroom) but now I understand that it’s better to teach from the back!’ (second course participant).

A number of teachers (7 out of 13 on the first course) also expressed a preference for a more inductive way of presenting new material while a general observation from tutors was that ICELТ graduates tended to be less willing to just ‘feed’ the students with new language input in the classroom (and less likely to use translation when eliciting new material or providing answers to student questions). Many teachers, after being introduced to new approaches to language teaching, reported the benefits of using a task-based methodology with classes and lessons with a high ESP content. As for observation, rather than receiving negative reviews, many of the ICELТ candidates replied in course feedback that they found this part of the course most useful and in two locations peer-observation schemes have actually been independently set up within institutes. (Many of the teachers admitted to being pleasantly surprised at the constructive methods used to conduct lesson feedback – in contrast to the rather one-sided and negative way it is often handled in their institutes. One of the ICELТ candidates from the second course wrote:

‘(lesson) feedback given in a friendly and positive atmosphere helps to develop my own critical eye and is very constructive.’

At the end of the first course, it was decided to continue with the development programme and select two trainers-in-training from the list of successful graduates. Both went on to train up on the 2006–7 course and although one of them expressed initial doubts about her abilities to go on to become a trainer both gained in enthusiasm and confidence as the second course progressed. Their comments on the training up programme included:

‘Having been exposed to two rounds of the ICELТ course with different roles gave me the chance to experience ‘both sides of the coin’ and to understand the learners’ needs better and the tutor’s task.’ (Natalia Arsenyeva 2007)

‘I learned to react positively to what teachers say if even it is not exactly what I want to hear: teachers like to hear that their comments have been taken into account and other teachers will be more willing to listen and

discuss if they think you are ready and willing to add their thoughts to the overall discussion. This course was a 'jumping-off place' (for trainees), which helped them to change their attitude to teaching, to put all the(ir) knowledge on the necessary shelves.' (Yulia Bandura 2007)

The ICELT course

In general all the course content was relevant to our context (very specific though it is). Although the ability of individual tasks to stimulate individual teacher reflection is of course almost impossible to measure, there was evidence that all the tasks to some extent accomplished this and certainly the greater participation of the teachers in their own development process and the greater ownership they had of the course have contributed to greater impact and potential for change than under the previous training system. All ICELT candidates built up an assessment file containing their written work, observations and reading done during the year.

Specific problems with the ICELT syllabus were few; occasionally with some candidates the complicated nature of understanding the tasks themselves rather than inability to complete them led to resubmission of work.

As regarding acceptance of the Ukrainian ICELT model by the local ministry as a blueprint for future courses, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence announced its intention in late May 2007 to partly finance the 2007–8 course and to wholly fund and support subsequent future ICELT courses as part of the teacher development ladder. This was particularly noteworthy considering that, up until that date, practically no ministry funds had been allocated to the training of teachers in Ukraine.

The Trainers and running the course

Although there were initial problems both with trainer standardisation and course management, as anticipated, these did not prove to be insurmountable. In relation to trainer attitudes and standardisation between markers, distance proved in the end less of a problem than specific task interpretation and the way answers were evaluated and feedback given by different trainers. In particular there was a noticeable difference in approach between tutors who had had a more developmental-type training themselves (PGCE, CELTA, DELTA etc.) and those who had had a more academic training (MSc and experience of university teaching etc.). Most issues were nevertheless resolved fairly quickly and by the start of the second course the level of standardisation reached was quite high; even though there were some problems in achieving all the requirements asked by Cambridge of the course (getting teachers to teach groups at distinctly different levels was sometimes difficult due to the overall low level of students), the course received a good report from Cambridge.

Regarding the logistics of course management, although effective communication between trainers was established easily it proved quite difficult to consistently reach all candidates by email and this resulted in considerable time being spent simply ensuring that all teachers had received the relevant information.

As a result of this, it was decided for the second course (2006–7) to incorporate a formalised online learning environment (Blackboard) into the course structure; this meant that, after training during the first input block, candidates accessed a single internet site for all relevant course information and were able to receive announcements, send emails, upload and download scripts and contribute to chatroom discussions. As well as considerably reducing the work of the Course Director, this almost certainly led to greater ownership of the course and all except one candidate from the 2006–7 course regularly used the site.

Achievements and lessons learnt

The decision of the local Ministry of Defence to agree to finance the course from September 2007 is evidence in itself that the course has been judged as a success, at least from the local perspective. Furthermore, the possibility that local trainers may well formally contribute to the 2007–8 Cambridge course for the first time means that the top of PEP's training ladder seems at last to be in sight. Whilst the trickle-down effects of the course in encouraging more formalised teacher development programmes in individual regional institutes have had mixed results (in some institutes ICELT graduates are regularly giving training sessions to colleagues while in others regional TT sessions are still infrequent), there is certainly hope that this will change and that the greater the number of teachers who complete the national ICELT course, the more the value of such training will be appreciated.

Moreover the 'underlying' benefits of such training should not be underestimated – teachers in many institutes are now happily and more confidently teaching from more communicative military coursebooks such as Campaign (2004) rather than the rather staid traditional grammar-translation focused tomes; the course also seems to have provided teachers with a realistic possibility for self-development and improvement at work. Interestingly, and despite the possibility of using the ICELT certificate to gain better working conditions elsewhere, only one ICELT graduate out of 24 has to date in fact left his/her current job. As one trainee from the first course wrote in feedback 'The course gave me the impulse to work hard on my self-improvement'.

Conclusion

This article has outlined how the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) has been used as a key rung in a national teacher development ladder in Ukraine. In terms of lessons learnt from implementing the ICELT course structure with a substantial distance learning component to a specific context, the Ukrainian programme has shown that such courses can be successful if:

- considerable thought is given to course familiarisation and explaining the rationale behind courses aiming to develop teachers rather than specifically giving them extra 'knowledge'
- trainees are given sufficient support by local trainers/mentors, the presence of peers doing the same

course, and/or through a virtual support system such as Blackboard. (Significantly, one of the two candidates who dropped out of the course over the two years it has been running was left relatively unsupported with no peer or online help).

In addition, the success and experience gained from running the ICELT course over the last two years has shown that, apart from the extra status and external accreditation that such a course can bring to existing teacher training programmes, it is also a very relevant and flexible alternate to other training course structures especially in ESP contexts because:

- The practical and written tasks involved are relevant, useful and culturally appropriate to teachers in even the most specialised teaching situations.
- The option of doing a large proportion of the course 'by distance learning' means that teachers are potentially able to more easily apply theory gained in input blocks elsewhere to their own practical workplace, again especially relevant in high ESP contexts.
- The course acknowledges and makes use of the experience and knowledge of the participants as a starting point for reflective development.
- There is strong evidence that the greater personal involvement and implied 'ownership' that participation on such a course entails results in greater overall impact than participation in more traditional trainer-centred programmes. Indeed it is possible that the reflective element involved in participant-led training might even lead to greater impact in cultural contexts and teaching establishments where 'lecture-type' training events are considered to be the norm rather than the exception.

Further queries on this project should be addressed to: David.Watkins@britishcouncil.org.ua

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Relevant websites:

- www.britishcouncil.org/ukraine-education-pep.htm
- www.blackboard.com

Teaching Knowledge Test update – adoptions and courses

CLARE HARRISON ASSESSMENT AND OPERATIONS GROUP

Introduction

In May 2005, Cambridge ESOL introduced the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), which is designed to assess English language teachers' knowledge about teaching, including concepts related to language, language use and the background to and practice of English language teaching and learning. In contrast to Cambridge ESOL's other assessments for teachers, such as CELTA, CELTYL, ICELT and DELTA, TKT is test-based rather than course-based, with teachers' knowledge assessed by means of a series of objective-format tests.

Content

From the statements made in the TKT specifications it can be seen that TKT adheres to the definition of teaching knowledge outlined by Grossman in 1990. She proposes the following four components of teaching knowledge: 'general pedagogic knowledge', which encompasses general principles of teaching and learning that are applicable across subject disciplines; 'subject matter knowledge', which refers to the understanding of the facts and concepts of a subject discipline as well as its substantive and syntactic structures; 'pedagogic content

knowledge', in other words, the representation of the subject matter through examples, analogies ... to make it more comprehensible to students; and 'knowledge of context', that is knowledge of educational aims, students and other content (Grossman 1990). The content of TKT is drawn from the first three of these knowledge areas, but unlike Cambridge ESOL's other teaching awards, knowledge of context is not assessed in TKT as this knowledge would be evidenced more appropriately through teaching practice, which does not form part of the assessment for TKT.

The content of TKT is organised into three free-standing modules with an 80-item multiple-choice test for each. Module 1 focuses on the subject matter knowledge needed by teachers of English, such as knowledge about language systems and skills; Module 2 is concerned with what teachers do to prepare for teaching, i.e. planning lessons, selecting and preparing materials and consulting reference resources, and Module 3 covers what happens in the classroom itself, e.g. classroom language, management and interaction.

Format and Results

Candidates may choose to take any of the modules, separately or together, according to their preference or local requirements. Tests are available on dates requested by test providers and results are reported in four bands, with candidates gaining a certificate for each module taken.

Flexibility and Accessibility

A key consideration in the development of TKT was the desire to offer maximum accessibility and flexibility to test takers and test providers. The content of TKT has therefore been designed to be relevant to teachers in a variety of teaching contexts, and at any stage of their teaching careers. See Nadežda Novaković's article in *Research Notes* 24, May 2006, for a discussion of candidate profiles. The modular structure was selected to allow teachers to fit TKT around their teaching work and to offer them maximum choice as regards the teaching content they could elect to focus on.

Positive impact – access to professional development for teachers

One of the most positive effects of the introduction of a test like TKT is the potential for increased access to professional development for teachers. As TKT is a test, test takers do not have to follow a specified preparation course – they can prepare for the test by reading about methodology and reflecting on their own teaching. Alternatively, they may choose to attend a dedicated TKT preparation course offered alongside the test by a test provider.

Courses can be designed to suit local conditions and teachers' needs, which means that course timing, length, mode of delivery and, to a certain extent, course content can be determined by the provider. The syllabus for the test is specified in the TKT Handbook, available at www.cambridgeesol.org/support/downloads/tkt_downloads.htm, which also contains full sample papers.

This syllabus can be used as the basis for course content, with areas of the syllabus being adapted or supplemented to meet local course participants' needs.

In addition to the *TKT Handbook*, a coursebook is available – *The TKT Course*, written by Mary Spratt, Alan Pulverness and Melanie Williams, published by Cambridge University Press, which can be used by course providers to support TKT course design and delivery as well as by individual test takers for self-study. A further resource that can be used to support test preparation is the *TKT Glossary* – a 'dictionary' of approximately 400 teaching terms that may appear in the test, which is available at www.cambridgeesol.org/support/downloads/tkt_downloads.htm

Finally, course providers can find TKT-related material on the Cambridge ESOL Teaching Resources Website, available at www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/tkt/index.htm. This can be used to familiarise course providers and candidates with test content and task-types and to find teacher training activities for use with participants on TKT preparation courses.

TKT adoptions and courses

In the last two years, large numbers of teachers and teachers-to-be have taken TKT in a wide range of contexts in over 60 countries. Data collected from candidates indicate that most follow a preparation course and the majority choose to take all three modules. In many cases, practising teachers of English, often with a great deal of experience, have taken TKT as a way of refreshing their knowledge about teaching. For these teachers, TKT provides a means of confirming the teaching knowledge they have gained from their experience. In some cases, pre-service teachers have taken TKT in order to familiarise themselves with English language teaching concepts, and in others, teachers of subjects other than English, who are being required to teach English alongside their main subject, have taken TKT to support them in their work.

Below are details of some of the ways in which TKT is being used around the world. As can be seen, there are many interesting teacher development projects worldwide which make use of TKT in a range of ways and contexts. Unfortunately, it is not possible to mention all the TKT uses or courses in this article. Those featured have been chosen as representative of the kinds of initiative that are in progress internationally and those not included have been omitted for reasons of economy of space or because the author is not aware of them. Cambridge ESOL is continually gathering data about the application of its examinations, and would be happy to hear about further uses to which TKT is being put.

Central and South America

Countries in Central and South America were quick to see the potential of TKT for use with their teachers, and many courses have been designed and delivered there to prepare candidates for TKT. Teacher development programmes exist across the region, e.g. in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, and TKT is being used primarily to support national

initiatives to set in place requirements for English teachers to have a grounding in practical pedagogical knowledge.

For example, the Ministry of Education in Mexico, where the largest number of TKT entries has been made to date, has incorporated the TKT syllabus into its new national development programme to retrain state secondary school teachers. Teachers work first on developing their English language proficiency and then move on to undertake training in teaching methodology based on the TKT syllabus.

In Colombia, a number of regional educational authorities have used TKT for their bilingual programmes as a means of introducing minimum standards for teachers. Large numbers of teachers have been sponsored to take TKT by the Regional Ministries of Bogotá and Risaralda, with other regions planning to follow. Currently, 24 universities across the country are delivering TKT courses.

Courses across the continent are being offered both face-to-face and online, with the Cultura Inglesa in Sao Paulo, Brazil being one of the first providers to offer an online TKT course.

Europe

International House Barcelona in Spain has also developed and offered an online course for TKT this year. Furthermore, face-to-face courses have been offered and tests taken at a variety of centres across Europe where TKT is being used for a diverse range of teacher development projects and has been taken in countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

In Italy, the Local Education Authorities and the Ministry of Education are using TKT as part of a four-year national project (Progetto Pilota) for training primary teachers to teach English. In Serbia, the Ministry has accredited TKT as 25 hours of professional development for English language teachers teaching in primary schools. Similarly, the Ministry of Education in the Czech Republic has accredited TKT and the preparatory course run by AKCENT International House Prague, and courses are being run across the country. In Romania, the British Council arranged for teachers involved in their Peacekeeping English Project (PEP) to take TKT. The candidates, who were teacher trainers for Romanian Police Cadets, took the exam as part of their course.

The Middle East and Africa

The introduction of TKT was timely for countries in the Middle East and Africa where, to date, candidates have followed preparation courses and taken TKT in Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Morocco, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. At the British Council in the United Arab Emirates, candidates are taking TKT while participating in a part-time CELTA course and have reported finding TKT a useful tool to summarise the knowledge

they are gaining about teaching from CELTA, which in turn has increased their confidence in the classroom.

South and East Asia

The test has been well received in South and East Asia, too. In Thailand, the Ministry of Education has adopted TKT as the benchmark standard for a project to improve English teaching throughout the country. More than 8,000 teachers are taking TKT in an initial trial this summer. Similarly, the Department of Education and Training in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam is using TKT for teachers of English in the city's state schools. The British Council is actively engaged in running TKT courses in the region, including programmes for state school teachers in Vietnam and Sri Lanka. In India, colleges running Bachelor of Education programmes around the country are to offer TKT as an option module in their teacher training programmes, and in Japan, the Ministry of Education is planning to use TKT to benchmark a cohort of teachers from six universities. The test is also being taken in China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Taiwan.

English-speaking Countries

Canada was the first country to make entries for TKT in May 2005. The candidates who took the first test were international teachers following a teacher development course at Language Studies Canada in Toronto. Similar groups of teachers regularly take TKT in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. In Ireland, primary school teachers are taking TKT to support their work with the growing number of pupils in their classes whose first language is not English.

Conclusion

It can be seen that since its introduction in 2005, TKT has proved a popular choice for governments and institutions looking for an accessible and flexible way to assess teachers' knowledge about teaching and to provide a syllabus for teacher training courses. The introduction of TKT has resulted in the development of a wide range of courses and materials for use in preparing candidates for the tests, which has the positive washback effect of allowing greater numbers of teachers access to professional development. TKT is a relative new-comer to Cambridge ESOL's provision for teachers, but as more data becomes available, it is Cambridge ESOL's intention to carry out more detailed analysis of the impact of TKT on teachers, teacher development and the ELT profession.

References and further reading

- Grossman, P (1990) *The Making of a Teacher*, New York: Teachers' College Press.
- Novaković, N (2006) TKT – a year on, *Research Notes* 24, 22–24.
- Spratt, M, Pulverness, A and Williams, M (2005) *The TKT Course*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recent publications of interest

Studies in Language Testing

July 2007 saw the publication of another title in the *Studies in Language Testing* series, published jointly by Cambridge ESOL and Cambridge University Press. Volume 26 by Stuart Shaw and Cyril Weir is entitled *Examining Writing: Research and practice in assessing second language writing*. Their book describes in detail the theory and practice of Cambridge ESOL's approach to assessing second language writing ability. A comprehensive test validation framework is used to examine the tasks in Cambridge ESOL writing tests from a number of different validity perspectives reflecting the socio-cognitive nature of any assessment event. The authors show how an understanding and analysis of the framework and its components can assist test developers to operationalise their tests more effectively, especially in relation to the key criteria that differentiate one proficiency level from another. The book provides an up-to-date review of relevant literature on assessing writing, as well as an accessible and systematic description of the different proficiency levels in second language writing and a comprehensive and coherent basis for validating writing tests. A rich source of information on all aspects of examining writing, this publication will be of considerable interest to examination boards who wish to validate their own writing tests in a systematic and coherent manner, as well as to academic researchers and students in the field of language assessment more generally. More information is available at: www.cambridgeesol.org/research/silt.htm

Publications by ESOL research staff

Neil Jones published an article in the March 2007 issue of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* (37/1). Neil's paper – 'Assessment and the National Languages Strategy' – presents Asset Languages, the system being developed by Cambridge Assessment to implement the Languages Ladder, aiming to set it apart from existing qualification frameworks by accrediting clearly defined functional language skills and providing motivation and support for learning. His paper discusses the challenges of creating a framework which validly serves these two purposes, and refers to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as a model for the Languages Ladder.

While still on the staff here at Cambridge ESOL, Tony Green published an article in *Language Assessment Quarterly* (Volume 3, No 4) on washback and IELTS. In his paper 'Watching for washback: observing the influence of the International English Language Testing System Academic Writing test in the classroom' he presents a

washback model that incorporates both test design and participant characteristics and then uses the model to predict behaviour on preparation courses directed toward the IELTS Academic Writing test by observing and comparing learners and teachers in IELTS preparation classes and EAP classes. He reports evidence for substantial areas of common practice between IELTS and other forms of EAP, but also, perhaps not surprisingly, for some narrowing of focus in IELTS preparation classes that can be traced to test design features.

An article by Roger Hawkey, Sue Thompson and Richard Turner appeared in *Learning, Media and Technology* (32/1) in March 2007. It describes the development by Cambridge ESOL of a video database for the storing, systematic retrieval, analysis and sharing of classroom video recordings. In this case, the video data were collected as part of impact studies on Cambridge ESOL language exams and language courses related to the exams. The article outlines the aims, principles and approaches involved in the development of an impact research video database, including software selection, main design features and envisaged future uses.

Other publications

Language Testing Reconsidered is a collection of papers offering a critical update on some of the major issues that have engaged the field of language testing since its inception. The origins of this collection of papers, which was launched at the Language Testing Research Colloquium, Barcelona, in June 2007, lie in an earlier LTRC held in Ottawa, Canada, in 2005. The volume includes contributions from key figures in the field, including Bernard Spolsky, Charles Alderson, Lyle Bachman, Alan Davies, Andrew Cohen, Tim McNamara and Elana Shohamy. As the title suggests, each of these contributors reconsiders language testing with the benefit of hindsight – looking back at its history, highlighting key challenges or issues, taking stock of the limits and potential of current practice, and looking ahead to the future. The remaining paper, by Anne Lazaraton and Lynda Taylor, discusses the growing contribution of qualitative research methods in language test development and validation over recent years, which has advanced our understanding of assessment products and processes, especially in the testing of speaking and writing ability. The volume is edited by Janna Fox et al (ISBN 978-0-7766-0657-6) and is available from the University of Toronto Press. All profits from book sales will go to the International Language Testing Association (ILTA).

Conference reports

As usual, Cambridge ESOL staff attended various national and international conferences in the first half of 2007 to report on research and validation work undertaken in relation to our tests and to help stay in touch with ongoing developments in the field.

BALEAP, Durham and IATEFL, Aberdeen

In April 2007, Rod Boroughs presented at BALEAP and Graeme Bridges presented at IATEFL where they outlined an important change in the way scores are reported in IELTS Writing and Speaking. These events followed earlier presentations made by Cambridge ESOL to key stakeholders at the British Council IELTS update seminars in London, Manchester and Dublin.

From 1 July 2007, scores for each part of the test will still be reported on a scale from 1 to 9, but now the Writing and Speaking tests will be reported in whole or half bands in the same way as the Reading and Listening tests. This change is the latest in a series of enhancements to IELTS, based on continual consultation with test takers, teachers, Receiving Organisations and other stakeholders around the world. There will be three main benefits:

- Receiving Organisations will be able to set their requirements for admission, recruitment, etc., more precisely, based on more detailed information about the test-taker's performance in each module.
- The Test Report Form will give test takers more precise information on their strengths and weaknesses.
- Scores will be easier to understand since all parts of the IELTS test will now be reported in the same way.

The presenters emphasised the fact that examiners will assess test takers' performances using the Writing and Speaking assessment scales in exactly the same way as they currently do. Their ratings for each criterion in the assessment scales will then be averaged by ESOLCOMMS (the software package used by IELTS test centres) to produce final Writing and Speaking Band Scores in whole or half bands. Receiving Organisations do not need to change the way they use IELTS scores unless they require a specific Writing and Speaking Band Score in addition to the Overall Band Score (the average of the four scores in Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking).

The presentations also outlined the extensive research which supports the introduction of half-band score reporting for Writing and Speaking. Since 2003 several modelling and simulation studies have demonstrated that the move to half-band score reporting will have minimal impact on the mean band scores for Writing and Speaking. For over 50% of candidates in the studies, there was no change in their Speaking and Writing score. For the remainder some individual Writing or Speaking scores moved up (e.g. a 6 became a 6.5) and a similar number moved down (e.g. a 5 became a 4.5). Furthermore, for

almost 90% of candidates in the studies, there was no change in their Overall IELTS Band Score.

Conference participants were also given the opportunity to see three Speaking performances illustrating progression on the new, more precise, scale from 5.5 to 6 to 6.5. These performances were taken from the IELTS Scores Explained DVD which has been updated to include half band performances in Speaking and Writing. New versions of the Information for Candidates leaflet, IELTS Handbook and Official IELTS Practice Materials will also be available later this year. In the meantime, further information may be found on the IELTS website (www.ielts.org).

Ron Zeronis also presented at IATEFL this year on the use of content specialists in developing tests of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). His presentation dealt with the challenges that ESP testing poses for test developers and outlined the process being used by Cambridge ESOL in developing ESP tests in collaboration with content specialists. This process was illustrated by a description of the development of two new Cambridge ESOL ESP tests: the International Legal English certificate (ILEC) and the International Certificate in Financial English (ICFE).

AAAL 2007 – Costa Mesa, USA

Lynda Taylor represented Cambridge ESOL at the annual conference of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) held in Costa Mesa, USA, in April 2007. She coordinated and presented at this year's Joint ILTA/AAAL Invited Symposium which took as its theme: *Are two heads better than one? Pair work in L2 learning and assessment*. This was an opportunity to profile some of the research conducted by Cambridge ESOL over the past 15 years into the paired format speaking test.

International Conference on Foreign Language Education – Istanbul, Turkey

Steve Murray attended this conference in late May 2007 at the Sabanci University, Izmit site, with the theme *Tuning in: Learners of language, Language of learners*. The conference was attended by delegates from a broad range of countries and institutions, including Australia, Belgium, Spain, the University of Northumbria, Cambridge Assessment, and primary, secondary and tertiary teachers from Turkish schools and universities.

Among the plenary sessions which attracted notice during the conference, one presentation was by Professor Claire Kramsch (University of California) on how she had studied university student perceptions of foreign language learning by asking students to supply metaphors to describe their experiences. For example, learning a language was said to be like; *putting on a brand new pair of shoes; it's uncomfortable at first, but you break them in*. In the final plenary, Dr Tony Humphreys (University College Cork and University College Limerick, Ireland) presented

and explored themes related to the conference on learners and learner language. Dr Humphreys developed his main premise of the importance of individuality, as it relates to both teachers and learners, supporting his message with pertinent and memorable examples from his work as a clinical psychologist. There was also a high standard among the concurrent sessions. For example, Dr Catherine Montgomery (Northumbria University) presented some of her research on the experiences of international students in the UK context, revealing a broad degree of positivity in those experiences; and two teachers, Sevdeger Cecen and Hande Ozturk (Maltepe University, Turkey) presented on how they had researched student stress in the classroom, and found it to be correlated with particular teacher attitudes and behaviours.

Publishers and educational institutions were well represented at the conference, with stands from Oxford University Press, The British Council, Garnet Education, and Cambridge University Press (CUP). The CUP representative, John Moorcroft, noted particular interest from teachers and delegates in CUP's methodology and reference books. There was also interest expressed by teachers from a range of Turkish educational institutions regarding Cambridge Assessment products, notably Young Learners Examinations (YLE), the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT), First Certificate in English (FCE), and also an interest in the Business English suite of Certificates (BEC). It was noted that the Key English

Test (KET) and the Preliminary English Test (PET) were also generating significant interest in the region, and of course, the First Certificate in English (FCE) was also known as a qualification which could, in some cases, offer a means of bypassing the preparatory entrance exam in English for tertiary institutions.

LTRC, Barcelona and EALTA, Sitges, Spain

Several members of Cambridge ESOL attended, presented and contributed in other ways to the annual conferences of LTRC and EALTA in June 2007. A fuller report on both these conferences – with photos – will be included in *Research Notes* 30.

Advance notice: Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) 3rd International Conference, Cambridge 2008

The ALTE 3rd International Conference will be held from 10–12 April 2008 at the University of Cambridge and hosted by Cambridge ESOL. The central conference theme is *The Social and Educational Impact of Language Assessment* with sub themes on *Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, *Intercultural Dialogue*, and *Impact and Stakeholders*. This event is intended to have a broad appeal and to be of interest to all professionals and practitioners with an interest in language assessment and associated issues. For further details visit www.alte.org/2008

Requests to Cambridge ESOL for data/materials for research purposes

We regularly receive requests from language testing researchers and students asking for various types of information about our language tests or about testing issues more generally. We do our best to respond as quickly and as helpfully as we can to such enquiries, but there are limitations on the amount of time and resources we can allocate to this activity, especially during busy periods; sometimes we are simply unable to respond immediately or to provide what is being requested. To help support the wider research community, here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

Where can I get information about Cambridge ESOL's exams?

A large amount of useful information about our exams is available on our Cambridge ESOL website. Start with the Home page and choose the section you're interested in. If you need hard copies of our documentation, you can download examination handbooks and other materials directly from the website, or you can order them from ESOL Information (email: ESOLinfo@ucles.org.uk). The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) website www.alte.org also provides information about tests offered in other languages by our ALTE partners.

What if I have a more general question about language testing/assessment?

We can sometimes provide the Cambridge ESOL perspective on general language testing/assessment issues, or we can suggest helpful references in the language testing literature; however, please be aware that due to daily operational duties there may be some delay in responding to your query. We often refer enquirers to our quarterly publication *Research Notes* (which has a helpful online Search facility), and to volumes in the *Studies in Language Testing* series which is jointly published by Cambridge ESOL and Cambridge University Press. Information on both of these can be accessed at: www.cambridgeesol.org/research/outcomes.htm

What if I want access to information which isn't in the public domain?

Granting access to materials such as live test materials, rating scale instruments, candidates' test scores or examination scripts raises issues of security and confidentiality; for ethical reasons, we can only release test scores and performance data in very special and controlled circumstances, and subject to data protection legislation

and accepted standards for good research practice. We consider all requests for access to confidential/sensitive information very carefully; though we try to respond positively, please note that it is sometimes not possible to provide what is requested.

What should I do if I want access to confidential data/materials?

You should send us a formal written request which outlines:

- the theoretical background for your study
- the research questions you want to investigate
- exactly what data/material you need from us
- your proposed methodology and analytical approach(es)
- the anticipated outcomes in terms of publications, presentations etc.

If you are a PhD or Masters student, we also ask for a letter from your academic supervisor in support of your request.

You should send your written request, along with your supervisor's letter, in the first instance to:

Dr Ardeshir Geranpayeh, Research & Validation Group
University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
1 Hills Road
Cambridge CB1 2EU
United Kingdom

What happens to my request after that?

Your request will be reviewed by members of our Research and Validation Group to evaluate the quality of your research proposal and to determine whether we can provide what you request. If we can, we will then discuss with you what is involved and explain any constraints that apply (e.g. we may not be able to match perfectly the requirements of your sampling matrix) before drawing up a formal agreement for you to sign. The agreement specifies the terms and conditions under which we will grant you access to and use of any data/materials we provide; it also affirms Cambridge ESOL's right to see and comment on all papers/reports before publication/presentation in the public domain. We expect researchers to remain in regular contact with us throughout their research and to return any data/materials on completion of their project in line with the signed agreement.

What are the reasons for Cambridge not approving a request?

There are various reasons why we may not be able to approve a request for data/materials:

- we may not have the data you want from us in the form in which you need it (e.g. certain candidate background information);
- we may not be able to provide what is requested according to your timeframe or other requirements;
- we may feel that your proposed study is not sufficiently well-designed to investigate the research questions, especially if they are complex or sensitive.

PhD and Masters students often ask us to supply them with specific performance and/or score data; sometimes we are able to do this, but on many occasions it is not possible for the reasons explained above. However, as 'researchers in training', there is great value in you planning and managing your own data collection activity; it means you can construct a balanced sample with known characteristics, and you can also gather valuable additional background information on the subjects in your study, via questionnaires, focus groups or verbal protocol analysis. Even if we are not able to provide you with test score and performance data for analysis, we can sometimes provide specimen or retired test materials for you to gather your own score/performance data.

What sort of research does Cambridge ESOL tend to support?

We find it easiest to support research studies which are well-designed and which overlap with our own research interests and validation priorities. In recent years, for example, we have been able to provide several PhD students at UK and US universities with audio recordings of performances in Cambridge speaking tests so that they could analyse and describe the test-takers' language output. These studies were not only of interest to the general language testing field in terms of methodologies used and the outcomes observed, but they were also of special interest to Cambridge ESOL within our ongoing process of validating speaking test design in our examinations.