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## **Teaching a Foreign Language: One Teacher's Practical Theory**

**Francis Mangubhai Perce Marland, Ann Dashwood and Jeong-Bae Son**

*Centre for Language Learning and Teaching  
University of Southern Queensland  
Toowoomba Q 4350  
Australia*

*Tel: +61 7 4631 1804*

*Fax: + 61 7 4631 2407*

*Email: [mangubha@usq.edu.au](mailto:mangubha@usq.edu.au)*

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## Abstract

In recent decades, teachers of second languages in many countries, including Australia, have been encouraged to use an approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This approach advocates the development of communicative competence as a primary goal through the extensive use of the second language as a means of communication during classroom lessons. Understandably, education authorities and teacher educators are keen to know what teachers understand by CLT and how well they have incorporated this approach into their second language teaching. This exploratory study seeks to answer these questions in respect of one teacher, who claims to use a CLT approach. This is done by documenting her personal practical theory of CLT, using a framework adapted from a well-known approach to describing models of teaching. Access to the teacher's practical theory was gained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall interviews involving use of videotapes of two of the teacher's lessons. The study establishes that the teacher's practical theory is an amalgam of many features of CLT approaches and of general teaching. The CLT components of the teacher's practical theory are largely consistent with features commonly listed in texts about CLT approaches, though there are some components of her theory that are not generally discussed in the CLT literature. The framework used in this study for representing the teacher's practical theories of CLT is also assessed and considered suitable for wider use.

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## 1. Introduction

Schools in the Australian state of Queensland teach Languages Other Than English (LOTEs) (or foreign languages), particularly European and Asian, from Grades 5 to 12. Queensland teachers of these foreign language subjects have been encouraged to use an approach commonly referred to as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and as the Communication and Language or Communication approach. CLT approaches have also been widely endorsed for use by Australian teachers of LOTE through the Australian Language Level guidelines prepared in the late 80s (Vale, Scarino & McKay, 1991). The inclusion of LOTE studies in the curriculum of these year levels is considered very significant because of the contribution it can make to the realisation of national priorities: Improving social cohesion within the multi-cultural societies of Queensland and Australia, extending opportunities for cultural and economic exchanges with other countries and enhancing relationships with countries and cultural groups on both regional and international levels.

CLT is not a rigidly circumscribed method of foreign language teaching but rather an approach, based on an amalgam of affiliated strategies, that seeks to develop communicative competence in students and requires a commitment to using the foreign language as a medium for classroom communication as much as possible. CLT classrooms are also usually characterised by a number of features that are commonly listed in the literature on CLT (Mangubhai et al., 1999; Williams, 1995). These features include: an emphasis on language use rather than language knowledge; greater emphasis on fluency and appropriateness in the use of the target language than structural correctness; minimal focus on form with corresponding low emphasis on error correction and explicit instruction on language rules or grammar;

classroom tasks and exercises that depend on spontaneity and student trial-and-error and that encourage negotiation of meaning between students and students and teachers; use of authentic materials; an environment that is interactive, not excessively formal, encourages risk-taking and promotes student autonomy; teachers serving more as facilitators and participants than in the traditional didactic role; and students being actively involved in interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning. In short, the approach “puts the focus on the learner” (Savignon, 2002, p. 4).

Understandably, given the importance of LOTE studies to the realization of national goals, education authorities and teacher educators have been keen to ascertain how well this approach is understood by those who are implementing it, how strong their commitment is to its use and to what extent this approach is reflected in teachers’ classroom practice. As Rollman (1994) notes, these are persistent questions that demand an answer if informed decisions are to be made about the effectiveness of, and improvements to, current teacher education programs aimed at assisting LOTE teachers to understand and implement CLT approaches.

## **2. Review of Relevant Literature**

To date, few studies of how well teachers understand and use CLT approaches appear to have been undertaken (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). Moreover, these studies tend to be small-scale and have been scattered across a number of different contexts. In a Scottish study, Mitchell (1988) used in-depth interviews to investigate the understandings of ‘communicative competence’ held by 59 foreign language teachers. She reported a wide variety of understandings ranging from communicative competence as a survival language, useful when travelling in foreign places, to one that is similar to Canale and Swain’s (1980) conception of the term. This conception was described in terms of grammatical, strategic and sociolinguistic competences, the last-mentioned being later differentiated into sociolinguistic and discourse competences (Canale, 1983). Mitchell also reported finding that many teachers still espoused beliefs about second language acquisition that were at odds with those underpinning a CLT approach.

A two-phase project undertaken by Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores and Dale (1998) in Australia sought to identify understandings and beliefs about CLT of some 39 LOTE teachers. In the first phase of the study, teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire, an adaptation of one developed by Karavas-Doukas (1996). In the second phase, follow-up interviews were conducted with six of the phase one respondents to probe further their beliefs about CLT. A conclusion of this research was that teachers’ understandings and beliefs about some key characteristics of CLT differed from those appearing in the literature on CLT.

Another study involving ten teachers of Japanese in Queensland state schools (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999), found that teachers’ conceptions of CLT were of four types: (a) CLT is about learning to communicate in

the second language; (b) CLT uses mainly speaking and listening; (c) CLT involves little grammar instruction; and (d) CLT uses activities that are time consuming. Observation of classroom practices in this study also indicated that teachers tended to use a didactic approach, with grammar playing a central role, features not consistent with CLT approaches. A number of other authors have also reported marked differences between teachers' and researchers' conceptions of CLT (Nunan, 1987; Whitley, 1993; Rollmann, 1994; Williams, 1995; Thompson, 1996).

A search of literature in the area of teacher thinking was also undertaken to see if studies had been conducted which could cast light on teachers' understanding of, commitment to, and use of CLT approaches. Research on teacher thinking has, as one of its goals, documenting the practical knowledge that teachers accumulate as a result of classroom experience and reflection on that experience. A fundamental premise underpinning this research is that what teachers do in classrooms is largely shaped by this practical knowledge, a premise that is well established and widely accepted (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1987; Ross, Cornett & McCutcheon, 1992; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Despite an extensive review of this corpus of literature, only one study of teachers' practical knowledge relevant to CLT approaches (Golombek, 1998) was located. In this study, the focus was on the personal practical knowledge of two English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers and not on their practical knowledge related to CLT *per se*. The findings did not bear on the issues of interest in this paper.

In summary, the little evidence that is available points to teachers having incomplete and imprecise notions of what CLT entails and to substantial differences within teachers' understandings of CLT and between teachers and researchers. In similar vein, Karavas-Doukas (1996) concluded that '... the few small-scale classroom studies that have been carried out ... seem to suggest that communicative classrooms are rare. While most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches' (p. 187), an observation also made by Savignon (2002). Thus the evidence is not regarded as substantial enough to allow clear-cut answers to questions about how well teachers' understand and use CLT. Yet such evidence is still urgently needed to allow a subsequent assessment of the effectiveness of programs of teacher education aimed at the preparation of LOTE teachers in the use of CLT approaches.

### **3. Outline of Project**

The preceding review points clearly to the need for more research into teachers' understandings of CLT and the adequacy of such understandings. These issues became the focus of interest in this study that, in keeping with other research into human knowledge and thinking, was set within a qualitative research paradigm. To allow research methods to be fine-tuned prior to their potential use in a larger, subsequent study, this project was planned as a small-scale, exploratory or pilot study involving only a few teachers, of

which one is the focus of this article. This particular teacher was chosen from amongst the others because she was the most articulate in elaborating her beliefs about teaching. The two primary questions to be addressed in this article are: What does the teacher understand by CLT? And, how adequate is such an understanding? A further question to be addressed, because of its bearing on a possible follow-up study, concerns the adequacy of the framework used in this study for representing the teacher's understanding of CLT.

#### **4. Research Methods**

An approach to investigating teacher understanding of CLT was used which owes much to current research on teacher knowledge and thinking. This research was used to source the choice of methods because, as noted earlier, it posits that what teachers do in classrooms is guided by the practical knowledge that they have built up largely through experience in classrooms. Because practical knowledge is a product of a natural tendency in human beings to try to make sense of the contexts in which they work and live and is used to build frameworks for guiding action therein, it can also take on the form of practical theory. While practical theories are not theories in the scientific sense because they are not '... conceptually precise, specifically explicated, and able to withstand rigorous logical tests' (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1987, p. 57), practical theories do allow teachers to describe, make sense of, and provide plausible explanations for, events in their classrooms. They are also useful for predicting what may happen in classrooms, hence providing a basis for purposive action through the generation of lesson plans that hold some potential for success (Marland, 1994). In common with other theories then, practical theories serve the functions of description, explanation and prediction. This has prompted teachers to be represented as theory-builders who continually construct, elaborate, test and refine their own practical theories of teaching (Schubert, 1992; Busher, Clarke & Taggart, 1988; Richardson, 1997). These premises provided the rationale for the decision that, to uncover teacher understandings of CLT approaches, appropriate methods would be those regularly used for exploring and documenting teachers' personal practical theories of CLT.

Two methods were chosen to assist the teacher in the explication of her practical theories of CLT: (a) Semi-structured, in-depth interviews; and (b) Stimulated recall interviews involving the use of videotapes of lessons taught by the teacher to prompt teacher recall of aspects of her practical theories.

##### *4.1 Semi-structured, in-depth interview*

The decision to use this interview approach was shaped by a number of considerations. First, this method has a long and successful tradition in teacher thinking research dating back two decades (Elbaz, 1983; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). It gives teachers the opportunities and time to detail fully and freely the bases for their approaches to teaching, without the constraints of a set schedule of invariant questions. Moreover, this approach allows prominence to be given to the voice of teachers rather than that of

researchers, an important consideration for ensuring fidelity of accounts of practice and their rationales (Elbaz, 1991).

Second, practical theories are considered to be largely implicit (Gage, 1977; Clark & Peterson, 1986) because they tend to build up in teachers' minds in the absence of a formal process of theory construction and because teachers are rarely invited to make them explicit. For these reasons, articulation of implicit theories by teachers can pose difficulties. These difficulties can be assuaged to an extent within the context of an in-depth interview by creating a climate conducive to teacher reflection and disclosure of details of their practical theories. Teacher engagement in these introspective processes can be encouraged by interviewers being empathic, supportive and non-evaluative, asking open-ended questions, seeking clarification and extension of the teachers' remarks and using the language of the teachers where possible. In this study, the role of interviewer was defined to include these features.

Third, a semi-structured approach was used because it was felt that it would provide flexibility to allow unique features of a teacher's practical theory of CLT to surface and would assist a teacher, inexperienced in articulating the bases for his/her teaching, to disclose important aspects of his/her practical theories (Berg, 1995).

A major challenge involved in using in-depth interviews in this study was deciding the set of core questions to be used within a semi-structured interview approach. The challenge faced by the research team was to decide how wide the net should be cast in interviews to ensure full disclosure of a teacher's practical theory of CLT. A wide variety of terms have been used to document teachers' practical knowledge and theories. The more prominent ones include values (Halstead, 1996), beliefs (Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992), principles and rules (Elbaz, 1983), aims or goals (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996; Marland & Osborne, 1990), strategies and actions (Brown & McIntyre, 1988; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996), normal desirable states (Brown & McIntyre, 1988), student progress (Brown & McIntyre, 1988), cues (Marland, 1997), teacher attributes (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996), contextual variables or conditions (Brown & McIntyre, 1988), images (Clandinin, 1986; Johnson, 1992), metaphors (Tobin, 1990) and pedagogical content knowledge (Gudmundsdottir & Shulman, 1987). A key question was: Which of these constructs should a teacher be invited to discuss when outlining his/her practical theories? Finding a suitable answer to this question proved challenging for several reasons, reasons that are explored in some depth here because the solution adopted is novel and exploratory and because it is grounded in an analysis of issues which have received scant attention in teacher thinking research to date.

First, determining the nature of core questions is made difficult by differences of opinion about the scope and focus of teachers' practical theories. Some researchers report that teachers have theories with quite specific foci such as pupil learning, classroom control, the aims of schooling, how teachers can 'repair'

interactions when they want to change student states-of-mind and how people should interact with each other in a learning process (Busher, Clarke & Taggart, 1988; Anning, 1988). Theories on these specific topics would have a much narrower focus than practical theories about, for example, teaching a particular age level or a subject such as History or Mathematics. Indeed, the latter could well subsume the former.

Secondly, there are marked differences in the number and nature of constructs used to encapsulate practical theories. Some describe practical theories only in terms of beliefs or metaphors or a combination of these two (Ross, Cornett & McCutcheon, 1992), while others provide much more extensive accounts of practical knowledge. Elbaz (1983), for example, in describing the practical knowledge of one secondary teacher of English, used five practical knowledge components (knowledge of self, milieu, subject matter, curriculum development and instruction) and postulated that the teacher's practical knowledge was structured in terms of rules of practice, practical principles and images. Other studies (e.g., Brown & McIntyre 1988; Batten, Marland and Khamis, 1993) provided other conceptualisations of practical theories involving a range of constructs and links between them.

Thirdly, accounts of teachers' practical theories usually pay little attention to the links between the discrete elements of these theories. Even an everyday or commonplace understanding of theory suggests that a theory must be more than an isolated or independent body of knowledge if it is to provide explanations for why teachers act as they do. According to Snow (1975), theories, in their simplest form, consist of two features - the components themselves and the set of relationships among components. Certainly, components of teacher practical knowledge appear to be linked in quite significant ways (see, for example, the work of Brown & McIntyre, 1988; Batten, Marland & Khamis, 1993; Marland, 1997). Such linkages can denote causal and reciprocal effects among components, mutually beneficial or inhibitory associations, pre-requisites for success in the use of a component, and contextual factors that impact on other components.

The challenge for the research team was to develop a framework for conducting semi-structured interviews that would allow an interviewer to promote, in non-leading ways, teacher talk on as many constructs and links among constructs as would ensure full disclosure of a practical theory. The compromise solution that was finally reached on the issue of what core questions should be included in in-depth interviews involved the use of the framework proposed by Joyce and Weil (1992) for describing models of teaching, but with some adjustments as explained below. The Joyce and Weil framework has the advantages of being widely known and respected in teacher education circles and of having been used with success in promoting teacher learning of new approaches to teaching (Showers, 1985; Showers, Joyce & Bennett, 1987). Table 1 below shows how the Joyce and Weil framework was used to identify foci of questions for helping full teacher disclosure of their practical theories. It should be noted that the foci included many of the constructs, listed earlier (e.g., values, beliefs, goals and principles), used to document teacher practical

knowledge and theory. Teachers were also to be given the opportunity to nominate any other features of their practical theories not covered by these constructs.

Table 1 about here
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The Joyce and Weil (1992) framework was thus used to generate the set of initial questions for use in in-depth interviews while, at the same time, drawing on the list of constructs used for describing teacher practical theories (see above). These questions usually took the form: “Do ..... (e.g. strategies, teacher-student relationships, teacher skills, etc) feature in your use of a CLT approach?” Or “Are there any ..... (e.g., strategies, teacher roles, aims) that are central to your use of a CLT approach?” Follow-up questions were not prescribed, arising instead from teacher responses to the initial questions and in keeping with the basic requirements for creating a context appropriate to teacher disclosure outlined earlier.

#### 4.2 *Stimulated recall interviews*

Videotapes of lessons involving use of CLT were made and used in post-lesson interviews to stimulate teacher recall of parts of practical theories related to classroom events. This method was used to provide a source for cross-checking in-depth interview data and to supplement such data in instances where the teacher was reminded, by cues on lesson videotapes, of other aspects of his/her practical theory not revealed in the in-depth interviews. In re-play sessions, the teacher was to be asked to stop the videotapes where aspects of a CLT approach were in evidence and explain the rationale for those classroom events. The interviewer took the roles of facilitator and client-centered counsellor to assist teacher disclosure of practical theory features and by listening carefully to the teacher, seeking clarification or elaboration where necessary, and reacting supportively but not judgmentally.

### **5. Selection of Participant**

The teacher-participant discussed in this article was one of seven who expressed an interest in being involved in the project. Like others, she attended a briefing session where they were informed of the goals and methods of the project, introduced to project team members, and invited to seek clarification of project details. At this meeting, information was also provided on the ethical standards that would apply, including assurances of preservation of anonymity and respect for the teacher’s right to withdraw at any time; the extent of the participant’s commitment of time to the project; and the need to select either a Year 7 or Year 10 class as the focus class for the research project. This choice of year levels was made to increase the likelihood of long student exposure to the LOTE and long teacher exposure to the class or class members, features seen as possibly contributing to the practical theory being well established and relatively stable. Criteria used in the selection process included: stated commitment to the use of CLT approaches in

classrooms; considerable experience as a LOTE teacher; involvement in in-service activities related to CLT; articulateness; and enthusiasm for involvement in the research project.

## **6. Data Collection**

The data base considered necessary for the preparation of an account of a teacher's practical theory of CLT included two hour-long in-depth interviews; video-tapes of two CLT lessons, each of about 30 minutes duration; and two hour-long stimulated recall interviews involving use of the lesson video-tapes to prompt recall of aspects of the teacher's practical theory of CLT as revealed by her use of CLT in the two lessons.

All in-depth and stimulated recall interview data and lesson video-tapes were gathered by one member of the research team without CLT expertise but with extensive experience in these techniques and in education. This decision was made because, in an earlier study (Mangubhai et al., 1999), an inhibitory effect on teachers was found to occur when interviews were conducted by those members of the research team with CLT expertise. Data collection sessions were arranged at times nominated by the teacher, usually over a three-week period, beginning with in-depth interviews and followed by video-taping and stimulated recall interviews. Stimulated recall interviews were conducted on the same day as the video-taping, with preferred times being immediately after the lesson was video-taped or as close as possible there-to.

## **7. Data Analysis**

All in-depth interview data were transcribed for subsequent analysis using a two-phase system of textual analysis. The first phase, unitization, involved reduction of all text spoken by the teacher to ideational units, defined as all the words at a particular point in the discourse embodying a single idea being expressed by the interviewee. The second step involved classifying each unit into one of 18 categories. The categories covered:

- fifteen interview foci which corresponded roughly to the dimensions in Joyce and Weil's (1992) framework for describing a model of teaching (see Table 1) namely, aims, assumptions (beliefs, values, principles), strategies, teacher role, student role, teacher-student relationship, student behavior norms, teaching skills, teacher attributes, special resources, principles of teacher reaction, instructional effects, nurturant effects, metaphors and images;
- three categories constructed to accommodate references to: (a) contextual features such as those relating to the class, individual students and institutional and community variables; (b) teacher affect; and (c) all other units falling outside those mentioned above.

All in-depth and stimulated recall interview data were coded by one member of the research team. A random selection of 10% of the teacher's transcripts was subjected to checks of reliability on both unitization and classification, using Brophy and Evertson's (1973) formula. Application of this formula, regarded as a stringent one, resulted in reliability figures of not less than 93% for unitization and not less

than 78% for classification. These figures were taken as indicating a very satisfactory level of coding reliability.

Once coding of all in-depth interview data had been completed, the results were recorded using Nvivo software to facilitate organisation and management of the coded data. All instances of each type of unit were then collated and print-outs of this re-organized data prepared. These data sets were then used to prepare an account of the teacher's practical theory of CLT in respect of the particular class nominated by the teacher using, where possible, the teacher's actual words. Data from stimulated recall interviews were used to supplement in-depth interview data.

An account of the teacher's practical theory of CLT was structured round the dimensions of models of teaching proposed by Joyce and Weil (1992), with additional information about the teacher, class and institution being used to contextualize the practical theory. A draft version of the account was first subjected to scrutiny by other members of the research team to ensure fidelity and completeness of the reporting, and then by the teacher. The teacher was asked to ensure that the account 'rang true', that is, represented, with fidelity, her personal approach to the use of CLT approaches and left out nothing of significance. Where the teacher sought modifications to the draft version, these were discussed fully and changes made until the revisions met with the teacher's approval.

## **8. Presentation of Teacher's Practical Theory of CLT**

The account of Doreen's practical theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is set out below. It is preceded by the presentation of some biographical data on Doreen and some information intended to contextualize the theory. The account of the theory is based on the framework proposed by Joyce and Weil for describing the essential features of models of, or approaches to, teaching.

### *8.1 About the teacher*

The teacher selected as the participant in this pilot study is Doreen (a pseudonym), a self-claimed native speaker of German, who was born in the Netherlands in 1947. She has been a resident for over 30 years of Australia where she completed her pre-service teacher education in 1969. From that time to the present, Doreen has been a teacher in Queensland schools. She holds a Diploma in Teaching, a Bachelor of Educational Studies and a Graduate Diploma in TESOL. Currently, Doreen is teaching in a junior state secondary school in a major provincial city in Queensland where she holds a position as a LOTE teacher.

### *8.2 About the class.*

The class chosen by Doreen to be the focus of interviews and lesson videotapes for the research project was a Grade 10 comprising ten students, eight boys and two girls whose chosen LOTE was German. The small number of students reflects the fact that, at the Year 10 level in this school, LOTE studies are optional, that is, do not have to be included in a student's course of studies in that year. Other factors impacting the size of this class were the relatively small size of the school (420 students) and the existence of other LOTE subjects. Doreen considers her Grade 10 class to be a 'select group', 'fairly knowledgeable' and 'quick on the uptake'. She has known most of the students since Year 8 and considers them 'keen to come' to the German class and reluctant to leave, so much so that she has '... almost got to throw them out at the end (of a lesson)'. Their school backgrounds in German vary considerably, with some not having studied German in primary school and one girl having commenced study of German only in Year 9. Normally, study of German in Years 8 and 9 is the pre-requisite for entry to the Grade 10 German class but this is waived in special circumstances.

Doreen believes that 'you've got to know your class' and likes to know their parents as well. She finds gathering information about them easy because of the small class size. One of the benefits of this knowledge of students for Doreen is that she knows their interests and can adjust lesson content to cater for these. Features of the class that warrant special attention, according to Doreen, are first, that two of the male students are autistic and second, some are members of one-parent families without mothers. The autistic students are members of this class because a policy of inclusiveness applies in Queensland State Schools.

### *8.3 About the institutional culture*

The school in which this study was set is a Junior State High School catering for students from Years 8 to 10. It was established within the last eight years as an adjunct to a much larger state secondary school and is located on a separate campus some distance from the 'mother' school. Doreen enjoys being a teacher in this school and asserts that the school administration is supportive of LOTE subjects.

### *8.4 Outline of Doreen's Practical Theory of CLT*

#### *8.4.1. Goal focus of her CLT Lessons*

For Doreen, a main goal of her use of a CLT approach is to have students able to 'converse' in German with Germans: 'At the moment our goal is to learn the language, to make it useful in Germany' for when students visit Germany in a couple of months time on a school-organised visit. Uppermost in her mind is the need for the second language to serve utilitarian purposes. It must be seen by students as 'real ... not some airy-fairy subject that they do only for exam purposes'. Moreover, she wants them to learn 'just basic survival German' and to be able to engage in casual, informal exchanges with 'someone in their own age group' about ordinary, everyday activities – 'talking about themselves, finding their way round town,

buying things, going shopping, eating, go(ing) to the bank ... post office, send(ing) a letter home to Australia ... to say what's wrong with them if they feel sick, how to talk over the telephone, (and) perhaps make an appointment'. Doreen wants her students to be fluent enough in German 'to make them feel comfortable if they were suddenly transformed into Germany'. In fact, 'being comfortable in the language' is described by Doreen as the ultimate goal of her CLT approach. Such a condition, in Doreen's view, means that students will have the confidence to use the second language without fear of ridicule and rejection.

Another important goal for Doreen is to expose students to the German culture because she believes that learning a language is made easier if studies of the language and the culture go hand in hand. Consequently, activities in Doreen's CLT lessons are frequently embedded in topics related to the culture of Germany - history, geography, customs, cuisine, fests, makes of car and breeds of dog. Through these activities, Doreen wants students not just to 'hear the language', converse in German and 'hone their listening skills' but also to note cultural similarities and differences, to become tolerant of others and to learn to be diplomatic.

#### 8.4.2 Assumptions

In-depth interviews with Doreen revealed a number of key assumptions about CLT which underpin her use of this approach with this specific Year 10 class. These assumptions have been grouped under headings (see below) generated by the research team from a careful analysis of interview transcripts.

*Integration of language and culture.* In Doreen's view, one of the benefits of mastering another language is that it allows you '... to make yourself feel comfortable in the culture'. But there is, in her view, a reciprocal benefit. She believes that 'through cultural exposure ... they (students) feel at ease with the language and the language will come easier ...'. Accordingly, she believes that to learn a language one needs to engage in a parallel study of the culture; hence she doesn't '... want to make the German language seem separate from their (German) whole way of life'.

*Macro-skills.* A key belief of Doreen's is that a language is 'for the purpose of communication'; in other words, you learn a language so that you can communicate with others via speaking, listening, writing and reading. 'If you are unable to see somebody, you have to talk ... use body language. If you can't do any of those, you can write. You certainly have to listen and you've got to read signs, ... menus, ... advertisements, ... timetables. You've got to read. All those four macro-skills will be covered'.

*Learning a LOTE.* The contentions in the preceding paragraph are linked to two of Doreen's beliefs about learning a LOTE. The first is that it is important for students to hear the second language in use, whether by native speakers or by their peers: 'I think the more they hear a language the better, regardless of what

dialect it is'. The second belief is that students should be encouraged to use the second language in oral exchanges in the classroom, no matter how faltering or incorrect their speech might be. As well, Doreen believes that students will also learn to communicate in German through written exchanges with German students via the internet. Above all else, Doreen asserts, you've got to '... get them talking in German'. She believes it is important for her to 'encourage contact (with Germans or German speakers), even if it's just basic info – how old are you? brothers and sisters? hobbies? what you like, what you don't like? Gradually, the questions get deeper and more involved'.

*Ways of building student confidence in use of the second language.* To build student confidence in using the second language, Doreen believes that it is best if oral exchanges are relatively private, between a student and his or her closest friend, and not involving strangers. Not surprisingly, given the above, she believes that the development of communicative behavior by students involves 'copying, mimicking and (listening to) me modelling' the language. Doreen considers that she 'talks to them a lot in German'. About one particular segment of her video-taped lesson, she commented: 'See, I just kept talking, in German, to give the kids a chance to hear German spoken all the time with the hope that they will pick up certain phrases.' Clearly, Doreen believes that, through hearing 'simple phrases all the time ..., they (students) will learn expressions, they will automatically adopt some of them and ... (they will learn that) through using simple phrases they can still prattle on (in German)'. Moreover, she maintains that students need to form an integrated view of the second language and not view it as 'isolated individual little topics' and that they need to learn how to transfer their knowledge of vocabulary learnt in one context to other contexts.

*Teacher use of L1 and L2.* So that students get to hear the second language in use, Doreen believes that it is important for her to use it during lessons, but not exclusively. She maintains that she must try to preserve a balance between usage of the first and second languages (English and German) – she calls it 'switching': '... (If I'm going back to English every now and then briefly, I'm picking up the ones who may have been lost, and then ... I don't even do it consciously, I'll switch back to German again'. At another interview point, she said: 'I try to keep a delicate balance ... I tend to give the shorter instructions in German' and longer explanations in English in case 'it goes right over their heads'; so for 'short commands or short responses ... I'd probably say that in German all the time'. Short expressions like '... that doesn't fit or that's wrong (or) if I'm telling them to be careful ... I say that in German because that is something that will have an impact on them'. As the first quotation in this paragraph indicates, her practice of switching frequently between the two languages serves another important purpose. It allows her to keep engaged in the lesson those students who may not comprehend what she is saying in German. Switching backwards and forwards enables her to keep those students tuned in to the lesson.

*Student errors.* Doreen also considers it important that students hear different German dialects. She tries to ensure this through using local, native-speaking Germans and, as well, video- and audiotape resources. One

assumption that Doreen stresses is that ‘it doesn’t really matter at first how many mistakes the (students) make, so long as they’re communicating. ... Regardless of how broken it is, or how badly grammatically it’s spoken, it doesn’t matter; if they can get the basic pronunciation, someone will understand’. The application of this belief was illustrated by Doreen by reference to such examples as ‘leav(ing) off an ending of an adjective’, putting ‘the verb in the wrong place’ or sentence syntax errors. She says, ‘I’d rather them communicate than worry about the grammatical structure’.

*The place of structure and grammar.* Doreen, however, does not believe that structure and grammar are unimportant, citing, as examples of their importance, knowledge of modal or helping verbs and placement of verbs and past participles at the end of sentences. In response to an interview question about the teaching of grammar, she said, ‘I do show them patterns of language ... I do have to teach them grammar. There is just no way about it’. But because she believes that students dislike grammar and find it a very ‘daunting’ subject, she tries to ‘camouflage’ it through her choice of topics. For example, she camouflages the study of the gender-sensitive forms of adjectives in lessons about German dogs with live specimens of dogs present during the lesson.

*Teacher reactions to student errors.* Doreen believes in encouraging students to use the second language even if it is far from error-free. She also believes in overlooking some of the errors where what students are saying is understandable: ‘I think that’s very important ... Encourage them to talk. Don’t stop them for every little mistake they’re making. It’s not very nice’. However, there are times when students make errors that she does try to adopt a specific reactive pattern. Instead of interrupting student talk, ‘... which (she claims she’s) got a very bad habit of doing ...’, she tries to ‘... wait till he’s finished and then I will remodel a correct structure’. She uses this pattern, hoping that students will ‘pick it up and re-use it correctly next time ...’. Secondly, she does not condone ridicule – ‘laugh(ing) at them’ or saying ‘... ha, ha, that was a stupid thing to say’. Rather, she seeks to assure them that she understands what they’re saying or writing but, reluctantly, avoids providing corrective feedback – ‘... I wouldn’t have made too much of a fuss about it’ (the error). This reluctance vanishes quickly if another student points out a mistake. Then, with some relief, she considers it appropriate to point out the mistake and how to correct it.

*The nature of topics, tasks and activities.* Other prominent beliefs in Doreen’s practical theory relate to the content and nature of topics, tasks, activities and other related aspects of LOTE lessons. The following sample of statements by Doreen indicates her commitment to a belief that tasks, activities and topics should be real, meaningful, useful and related to students’ interests:

- ‘So, their tasks are all set in realistic situations, such as, “you are writing a letter to a friend” or “you have just been introduced to a group of Germans. How would you go about explaining such and such” or “you’ve met a lady in the street, in Bonn; here’s a map; she wants to go to that direction. How would you help her get to her destination”’.

- ‘That’s right. Be realistic. If you make it too airy-fairy for them, their vocab. may not be forthcoming. And it’s meaningless’.
- ‘I think the overlying factor when you’re teaching a language is “how useful is it”? You don’t have to say, “The postman brings a big green letter”, or something like that. You’re better off talking about a pop group in Germany. That’s more their style’.

The last statement also explains Doreen’s dislike of working from text-books. She believes that the tasks she sets are more realistic than those found in textbooks because she can make them more relevant to the interests of her students.

*Values.* Doreen’s use of a CLT approach is grounded in certain values that she sets out to promote. Two of these are ‘listening to each other’ and ‘supporting each other’. ‘One thing that I’m very finicky about is “be prepared to listen to somebody else speaking” and it’s also one of our class expectations that we’ve typed up on a little poster’. Her endorsement of the second of these values is revealed in her comments following an oral presentation in German by one of her two autistic students who had refused, over two years, to address the class: ‘... (W)ell the kids nearly gave him a standing ovation. They clapped, and they clapped, and he went red, and he went all colours; but that was so spontaneous. I was really impressed’.

Other values considered important by Doreen are independence, taking responsibility for their own learning and ‘giving it a go’. She expects students to take responsibility for their own learning and, to this end, very seldom sets homework. ‘They know that their responsibility is to go through what they’ve done that day. ... So it’s their own individual responsibility, that they have to learn’. She expects them also to display independence, for example, in the preparation and presentation of their orals and in research. She tries to encourage student independence by allowing them to follow their own interests, for example, during internet sessions, by responding positively to requests from students about topics they would like to cover and by reacting with ‘lots of encouragement’ to the ideas and answers proffered by students. In these ways, too, she seeks to get them to ‘have a go’ because, as she puts it, ‘... if you don’t give it a go, you’ll never learn’. At the same time, she wants classroom interactions to be tempered with much justice: ‘I believe in giving everyone a fair go. That’s why we’ve got one of our classroom expectations on the wall, “please give everybody a go”’.

Values of reliability and punctuality were also highlighted by Doreen. Her reference to these values was probably due to the imminence of a class visit to Germany. In the following quote, Doreen points out how important these two values will be in ensuring that their trip is trauma-free: ‘Because the majority of them are coming with me to Germany, ... I’ll be testing that. “Are you reliable to look at the clock and know that you’ve got to be on the platform 5 at 2 minutes past 10?” ...’.

*Pedagogy.* Doreen has designated a number of key pedagogical beliefs in her perspective on pedagogy, amongst which are:

- Catering for all ('I'm trying to cater for all of them');
- Going from the known to the unknown ('So I always go from the known to the unknown');
- Conducting assessment in informal situations ('Because an informal situation is less stressful ... (you're) not under so much pressure, they don't realize that they're going to be tested ...');
- Making the lesson student-centred (In respect of one video-taped lesson, she said: 'Now, in this case, I would like to criticize myself. The lesson could have been more student-centered. I find that I was talking too much.');
- Showing sensitivity to the backgrounds (e.g. religious) of individual students ('I know not to delve too much on religious customs in Germany. If we do Christmas and Easter things, I know I've got to have just a simple colouring in thing for him that's not so religiously oriented'); and
- Limiting listening activities to match students' attention spans ('... (If I end up talking for 5 minutes long, I'll lose them in the first 30 seconds ...).

#### 8.4.3 *Strategies*

Doreen is committed to using a variety of strategies because she wants to cater for all of them and '... appeal to all their (students') sides'. Her choice of strategies is influenced by a number of broad principles: (1) She tries to 'give them a broad cross-section of experiences in anything that's German – a lot of visual work (and) hands-on work'. (2) She embeds strategies in topics that she believes are 'interesting for the kids' but, where unavoidable topics lack appeal, she camouflages them under other 'titles'. For example, as mentioned earlier, rules about the placement of adjectives relative to nouns are 'camouflage(d) behind the idea of bringing a live animal into class'. (3) Strategies are selected which can be coupled with attempts to 'encourage them (students) to talk'.

A strategy frequently used by Doreen includes the use of games such as German versions of Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit. A game 'we often play ... (is) where you have a basket full of objects and someone in the middle with the ball (passing it) backwards and forwards. ... I start passing articles and saying the names in German and they pass the article around while the ball's still going round'). Other strategies include role plays, excursions to places which reflect German culture and heritage (restaurants, a cuckoo clock center and cemeteries), the use of native speakers of German ('I bring in a lot of German people') and situational conversations ('... (S)ay you're on a bus, you want to go to such and such a place, you want to ask how many stops it is and how much you've got to pay').

Because the tasks she sets are '... usually communicatively based' and thus involve oral work, extensive use is made of group-work ('We do a lot of group-work'). As mentioned above, strategies also include the

use of the internet ('Every Friday afternoon, I've got them booked into the library for a whole term and I get them onto the German school network and I encourage them to find an e-mail pal').

Doreen also notes that 'there are times that I have to do chalk and talk and there's no way about it'. An illustration of a topic that lent itself to a chalk and talk approach was: 'If I'm trying to get across the idea of the nominative case and the accusative case like the subject and the object of a sentence'.

Doreen's classroom practice is often shaped by a concern about the level of student understanding when German is being used. For example, during a lesson when a local dog-trainer was addressing the class in his native German about the history and breeding of the German shepherd dog, her concern about student understanding emerged: 'So I was worried. Are they understanding? Are they getting anything out of it?' At interview points when this concern was expressed, Doreen indicated that she monitors their level of understanding by watching for certain student cues: 'I know when I'm losing them. They get a pretty glazed look on their faces. They start counting the spitballs on the ceiling. They may start to doodle. And little Jean (pseudonym), who's never done Grade 8 German ... actually gets a very anxious look on her face if I'm losing her.' When a lack of student understanding has been identified, Doreen then switches to English but asks students to indicate what they have understood: 'And that's why I stopped and said, "Let's do this in English but first tell me what you've understood ..."'

#### 8.4.4 *Social System*

This component of Doreen's practical theory of CLT is dealt with under the following four headings: *Teacher roles*. As noted in the previous paragraph, Doreen adopts the traditional 'chalk and talk' role. She made reference to this role in interviews when discussing the introduction of grammar into some lessons, for example, 'when we're doing adjectives in front of the noun' and when dealing with the case of verbs. At other times, when students are engaged in tasks she has set, she adopts the role of 'facilitator' when 'I will offer suggestions, ... steer them in the right direction' and respond to their questions. On other occasions, Doreen says, '... I take an absolute back step like when they're on the internet. I don't interfere at all. I'll look over their shoulder to make sure they're not on any site they shouldn't be on. I know my boys!'

Among the other roles mentioned by Doreen were those of: 'mother', especially important in her view because she has so many boys in her class without mothers; 'friend'; mediator when, for example, the two autistic students '... without meaning to ... cause a bit of friction in the class'; and organiser of excursions including 'the parents who come along for the excursion on the day ...'. Exercise of the role of mediator is infrequent because this Year 10 class is '... such a beautiful group'.

*Student roles.* Roles that Doreen wants students to play include those of group worker and sharer – because they have to ‘converse’ and ‘talk to each other’ in German and help each other learn new words; learner; listener; and ‘investigator’. She also wants each student to be an ‘initiator’, for example, of topics for oral presentations and of the slants they take, of questions in German during visits of native speakers from the community and of responses to the tasks she sets.

*Teacher-student relationships.* The classroom atmosphere Doreen seeks to establish in her CLT lessons is one that is positive, non-threatening – ‘I think that’s very important’ - and respectful of herself. She also works to ensure that the classroom atmosphere features a cooperative relationship between herself and students and among students, and that it is relaxed and informal. The means she has of getting rid of a ‘formal, sterile structure’ include re-organizing the seating into semi-circles’ and restricting her use of chalk and talk. In Doreen’s view, a relaxed and informal atmosphere is one means of inducing students to interact more and of enhancing learning: ‘I think you get more out of it if your are relaxed and informal’.

*Normal student behaviors.* Behaviors that Doreen seeks to encourage students to display during CLT lessons include: being ‘on task’ and ‘focussed’; ‘taking responsibility for their learning’; showing independence; being responsive to her, especially when she wants to engage in formal instruction; and asking lots of questions - ‘inquiring, not only asking me words but asking me why or how ...’. Cooperative behavior, particularly helping and supporting peers, is one that she appears to stress: ‘I really like it when they’re helping each other’.

#### 8.4.5 Support system

This component of a practical theory focuses, not on the basic or run-of-the-mill resources that are essential to CLT approaches, such as white boards, writing tools and classroom furniture, but on the human and physical resources that are beyond the usual. These “extra-ordinary” features are dealt with under the following three headings:

*Teaching skills.* In Doreen’s view, effectiveness in the use of CLT approaches requires that teachers be able to gauge whether ‘... they’re not getting through to them (the students)’. Making use of visual cues given out by students - ‘You can soon gauge by their eyes’ - is at least part of this skill of interpreting the mental states of students. Once the teacher has made the assessment that the students lack understanding, then the second skill, that of altering the teaching approach, needs to come into play, according to Doreen. ‘You’ve got to be able to alter your teaching approach so quickly’. Doreen also made brief reference to a management skill, that of maintaining order and ensuring observance of classroom rules.

*Teacher attributes.* Doreen maintains that, in order to use a CLT approach successfully, a LOTE teacher needs to be ‘passionate about the subject’, encouraging (‘you’ve got to encourage them’), demanding (‘...’)

don't let them get away with just shoddy work') but 'understanding ... of not only their age level, but maybe of their abilities'. Success also requires, in Doreen's view, that teachers be flexible, able to use '1001 ways of teaching that particular point of grammar' for example, and that they have an in-depth knowledge of the second language. 'A basic knowledge is not good enough' in Doreen's view. According to her, a teacher's knowledge of a second language has '... got to be damn good, otherwise the kids'll pick up really quickly ... if you're hesitant'. Being diplomatic, helpful, critical, friendly, patient and nice were other teacher attributes mentioned by Doreen as being important in CLT lessons.

*Special resources.* 'Bring in the outer world into the school' is one of Doreen's catch-cries in respect of special resources for CLT lessons. It is a general principle that she applies to her choice of resources. However, it is also quite clear that Doreen believes that resources should be authentically German. Exemplars of authentic German resources provided by Doreen include: German videos '... that I buy in Germany, ... no subtitles'; German television programs, '... especially the ones with the advertisements ...'; 'youth magazines, e-magazines and posters, all of Germany as it is today'; stickers and stamps sent over by 'my German friends'; German dogs; and, as noted previously, German versions of Trivial Pursuit and Scrabble.

A second principle enunciated by Doreen is: 'The more people you bring in (the better)', meaning local residents who are native speakers of German. As an example, in one lesson recorded on video for the project, Doreen arranged an address to the class, in German, on the German shepherd dog, by a native speaker of German who was also a dog trainer. Doreen also makes use of resources from a near-by branch of the Goethe Institute as well as those on the internet.

#### 8.4.6 Principles of teacher reaction

The principles that Doreen strives to observe when reacting to students include the following:

- Not being critical when students show initiative ('That's why I didn't rouse on Bill and Pete (pseudonyms) when they ended up in the German (internet) chat room');
- Reacting to student questions by probing ('... I won't tell them but I'll sort of try and get the answer out of them');
- Reacting to student questions about the meaning of a passage in German by encouraging them to deduce the meaning and by guessing the meaning of words that they don't know;
- Reacting with supportive comment to student effort ('This would be a better way to say it, instead of outright saying, "Don't be stupid. You can't say that." I can't think of a bigger put-down'; and 'If students are making an observation which may not be correct but they want to share their knowledge ... I'll probably say, "Look, nearly there" or "You're pretty spot on" but then I add a little bit extra');

- Reacting to student responses with corrective feedback or inducement to reflect further ('Maybe, but don't you think that maybe that could be better'; 'I could rephrase it and throw the question back on them'; 'Returning with other alternatives'; Using '... queries to make sure that they're thinking again').

#### 8.4.7 *Instructional and nurturant effects*

Doreen nominated three important instructional effects of a CLT approach: mastery of language related to everyday topics, citing as examples the size of dogs and the game of soccer about which she claims Germans are very passionate; the acquisition of alternate vocabulary such as 'snout' for 'mouth', 'claws' for 'finger nails' and 'paw' for 'foot'; and, arising from such a vocabulary-rich background, the ability 'to manipulate what they've learnt' in one context and transfer it to others.

Nurturant effects identified by Doreen included '... a love for learning a language or an inquisitiveness on how does this language get put together'; a hunger for '... more than what I've actually given them, whether its German pop music or German fashions or German cuisine ...'; and an awareness of and respect for the feelings of others, attitudes which she believes have developed as the result of having two autistic students in the class.

### **9. Discussion**

This study was undertaken to seek answers to two primary questions in respect of Doreen, the teacher-participant: What understanding of CLT approaches does she hold? And, how adequate is her understanding of CLT approaches? In this section of the report, these two questions will be dealt with in turn but, at the outset, it is important to note that Doreen considered that the above account, incorporating changes that she made to an earlier version, was a faithful and comprehensive representation of her practical theory of CLT and did not require any further additions or alterations. Secondly, inquiries about the possibility of her thinking about her CLT approach in terms of metaphors or images were initiated but these also came to naught. This section ends with an assessment of the adequacy of the framework, based on the work of Joyce and Weil (1992), used for documenting Doreen's practical theory.

#### 9.1 Doreen's Understanding of CLT

Doreen's practical theory of CLT is an amalgam of many of the features of CLT approaches, including those most commonly cited in the literature, and many features of general teaching. Those features of CLT approaches, enunciated in the introductory section of this paper, are outlined first along with indications of Doreen's commitment to them (or lack of commitment) as outlined in her practical theory. Her comments indicate a firm commitment to most features and a partial or even an implicit commitment to others.

- *The goal of developing students' communicative competence.*

Doreen clearly accepts this as a principal goal in CLT lessons. This is made evident in her espousal of a belief that language is for the purpose of communication via the four macro-skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing (see 8.4.1 and 'Macro-Skills' under 8.4.2). Further evidence of this can be found in her wanting her students to be able to converse in German with Germans, to be able to engage, both orally and via the internet, in casual, informal exchanges about everyday matters with German youth of their own age, to hone their listening skills and '... to read signs, ... menus, ... advertisements (and) ... timetables' (see 'Macro-Skills' in 8.4.2).

- *A commitment to using the foreign language as a medium for classroom communication as much as possible.*

In a number of the assumptions outlined in Doreen's practical theory (see 8.4.2 under 'Learning a LOTE', 'Ways of Building Student Confidence in Use of the Second Language' and 'Teacher Use of L1 and L2'), she stressed the importance of students being exposed to hearing and using the German language as much as possible in the classroom. She arranged for this to occur through her use of German in the classroom, via the internet, through the use of resources written in German and through contact with Germans and German speakers.

- *An emphasis on language use rather than language knowledge.*

In 8.4.2, under 'Student Errors', 'The Place of Structure and Grammar' and 'Teacher Reactions to Student Errors', for example, she states her beliefs in encouraging students to use the second language even if it is far from error-free, in overlooking student errors where their use of German is understandable and down-playing the place of structure and grammar in her CLT approach. These comments indicate a greater emphasis on fluency-related activities in her classroom.

- *A greater emphasis on fluency and appropriateness in the use of the target language than structural correctness.*

In 8.4.2 under 'Learning a LOTE', Doreen indicated that getting students to use German was her main priority and that, in pursuit of this goal, faltering or incorrect speech should be overlooked. She made no reference, however, to student fluency and appropriateness in the use of German. Thus it cannot be inferred from her statements that she would attach a higher priority to these aspects of student usage than structural correctness.

- *Minimal focus on form with corresponding low emphasis on error correction and explicit instruction of language rules or grammar.*

As seen in 4 above, 'Learning a LOTE' (in 8.4.2) provides some evidence that Doreen gives low priority to form or structural correctness. In the same section, under 'Student Errors' and 'Teacher Reaction to Student Errors', she makes abundantly clear her belief that student errors warrant little attention: '... (I)t doesn't really matter at first how many mistakes the (students) make, so long as they're communicating'. There is also a hint in 'The Place of Structure and Grammar' in 8.4.2 that Doreen would agree with giving low emphasis to explicit instruction in grammar. This is suggested in two of her comments. The first is that, while acknowledging that structure and grammar are not

unimportant, Doreen focuses on these aspects of German as the opportunity arises, a principle now referred to as form-focussed instruction (Ellis, 2001). The second comment is to the effect that, because students find grammar daunting, Doreen ‘camouflages’ her treatment of it.

- *Classroom tasks and exercises that depend on spontaneity and student trial-and-error and that encourage negotiation of meaning between students and students and students and teachers.*  
Doreen made no explicit references to spontaneity, student trial-and-error and student negotiation of meaning. She did, however, stress the importance of students ‘giving it a go’ (see under ‘Values’ in 8.4.2). This might be seen as implying a degree of risk-taking by students and hence opportunities for trial-and-error learning.
- *Use of authentic materials.*  
Under ‘Special Resources’ in 8.4.5, Doreen’s commitment to the use of authentic resources is made clear. Here she makes reference to her use of a range of resources from Germany including videos, games, television programs, magazines, e-magazines and German-speaking members of the community.
- *An environment that is interactive, not excessively formal, encourages risk-taking and promotes student autonomy.*  
Elements of Doreen’s practical theory (see ‘Teacher-Student Relationships’ and ‘Normal Student Behaviors’ under 8.4.4) indicate she is in general agreement with this feature of CLT approaches. She eschews formal structures in favour of ones that are ‘relaxed and informal’ and ‘positive and non-threatening’. These features make classroom environments more productive in her view – ‘I think you get more out of it ...’, and encourage students to interact. Doreen also encourages students to ask lots of questions, both factual and higher-order ones, to take ‘...responsibility for their learning’ and to be independent. Indeed, student independence is seen by Doreen as an important value to be cultivated in CLT classrooms (see ‘Values’ in 8.4.2). Here she cites some of the forms of student independence she strives to develop and the tactics she uses to promote them.
- *Teachers serving more as facilitators and participants than in the traditional didactic role.*  
The role of facilitator is one that Doreen adopts (see ‘Teacher Roles’ in 8.4.4) though she also admits to serving in a didactic role, or ‘doing chalk and talk’, as required (see 8.4.3). She serves as ‘facilitator’, defined by her as including ‘... offer(ing) suggestions, ... steer(ing) them in the right direction’ and responding to their questions, when students are engaged in task work or in group work, the latter being used extensively by Doreen (see 8.4.3).
- *Students being actively involved in interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning.*  
Clearly, Doreen wants students to be active participants in the CLT classroom. Among the active roles she wants students to adopt are ‘group worker’, ‘sharer’, ‘investigator’ and ‘initiator’ (see ‘Student Roles’ in 8.4.4). However, though some of these roles involve the students in expressing themselves in German (e.g. in oral presentations, conversations, communicative tasks, and asking questions during presentations by native speakers of German) (see ‘The Nature of Topics, Tasks and Activities’ in 8.4.2

and 8.4.3), only one reference by Doreen to 'interpretation' and 'negotiation of meaning' was found (see 8.4.6).

There were evident in Doreen's account of her practical theory of CLT other features, not usually cited in lists of common features, that are regarded as part of CLT approaches. Instances of such features include:

- The goal of seeking to develop in students tolerance of others and diplomacy in relations with people from other cultures (see 8.4.1).
- Making lessons student-centered and adjusting lesson content to cater for students' interests, part of the knowledge of students that she garners deliberately (see 'Pedagogy' in 8.4.2 and 'About the class', provided in contextual information prior to the account of the practical theory).
- Engaging in studies of the German culture by embedding activities in topics related to the culture of Germany – history, geography, customs, cuisine, fests, makes of cars and breeds of dogs - to ensure that students see the German language as an integral part of the German culture (see 8.4.1 and 'Integration of Language and Culture' in 8.4.2).
- Helping students to form an integrated view of the German language and not to see it as 'isolated individual little topics' (see 'Ways of Building Student Confidence in the Use of the Second Language' in 8.4.2).
- Frequently using simple phrases in German in her talk with students in the hope 'they will pick up certain phrases'. Although her reasoning is not stated, Doreen has an expectation that students acquire the target language from such exposure. This belief is not contrary to CLT. (see 'Strategies' in 8.4.3)

Doreen's practical theory of CLT incorporates other components that are not related to CLT features. These other components are quite numerous, are probably derived from aspects of Doreen's general teaching, but do not appear to be at odds with CLT approaches as generally conceptualised. For example, Doreen made reference to:

- Building up student confidence in the use of German so that they would feel comfortable in the language as a goal (see 8.4.1).
- Switching from English to German and vice versa as a management technique to ensure student engagement in the lesson (see 'Teacher Use of L1 and L2' in 8.4.2).
- Values she considered important in the classroom. These included listening to each other, being supportive of each other, encouraging students to generate ideas and answers, reliability and punctuality (see 'Values' in 8.4.2).
- Beliefs about teaching including those to do with going from the known to the unknown, using informal settings for assessment purposes, showing sensitivity to students, matching

lesson content to students' attention spans and making classroom rules explicit (see 'Pedagogy' in 8.4.2).

- Chalk and talk as a teaching strategy (see 8.4.3).
- Student behaviors such as being on-task and being responsive to her as the teacher (see 'Normal Student Behaviors' in 8.4.4).
- Gauging and interpreting student cues to assess their level of understanding and adjusting the lesson accordingly (see 'Teaching Skills' in 8.4.5).
- Flexibility as a teacher attribute (see 'Teacher Attributes' in 8.4.5).
- A number of principles of teacher reaction including probing, reacting to student effort with supportive comment, not reacting critically to student initiatives, providing corrective feedback and inducing students to reflect further and encouraging students to deduce and guess meanings of words (see 8.4.6).

In summary, Doreen's understanding of CLT as revealed in her practical theory incorporates many of the commonly listed features of CLT, other features of CLT not usually listed and many features of her general approach to teaching. In other words, Doreen has integrated many features of general teaching into her practical theory of CLT. From a CLT experts' perspective, her understanding of CLT is therefore a 'hybrid' or composite version including CLT and non-CLT features but with no features that could be classed as not consistent with CLT approaches. From a practitioner point-of-view, holding such an understanding of CLT probably makes good sense because actual lessons involving CLT are unlikely to be based only on commonly listed CLT features. Actual lessons probably incorporate CLT features and non-CLT features. One reason is that teachers are unlikely to eschew the use of sound teaching practices when using a CLT approach even if such practices are sourced in general teaching, provided they are not at odds with CLT features. Hybrid versions of practical theories would not receive endorsement by CLT advocates if practices from general teaching ran counter, or were antithetical, to CLT approaches. Neither Doreen's practical theory of CLT nor her practices in two video-taped lessons showed such a tendency.

## 9.2 Adequacy of Doreen's Understanding of CLT

The above analysis of Doreen's Practical Theory reveals that there is extensive overlap between her practical theory and the list of ten text-based common features of CLT. Moreover, no areas of divergence were found. It also appears that Doreen's understanding of CLT includes some features that are not strictly CLT but are aspects of general teaching which are CLT-compatible. These have been integrated into her CLT approach. A plausible inference from these assessments is that Doreen has a sound appreciation of CLT. Further support for this inference can be found in an examination of classroom practices in the two video-taped lessons taught by Doreen. They exhibit extensive use of the second language by an invited German-speaking guest, teacher and students; use of authentic resources; informal lesson environment with

students seated in a semi-circle during the presentation and able to interrupt the presentation to ask questions of the presenter; use of group work; acceptance of students' answers in German without correction; a focus on language use with occasional shifts to structure as necessary arising from opportunities within the lesson; students actively involved in expression and interpretation ; and teacher operating to facilitate student understanding and group work.

One limitation of this assessment of the congruence between Doreen's practical theory and the ten common features of CLT listed earlier is that the ten features represent quite a coarse-grained description of CLT. To enable a more precise assessment to be made of the extent to which Doreen's practical theory reflects a CLT approach, a much more fine-grained description of CLT is needed. Use of the Joyce and Weil framework outlined above to develop such a description could provide an effective solution. This framework would allow CLT approaches to be defined in terms of goal focus, theoretical assumptions, strategies, social system (comprising teacher role, student role, teacher-student relationships and normal student behaviors), support system (comprising teacher skills, teacher attributes and special resources), principles of teacher reaction and instructional and nurturant effects.

A second limitation of the above analysis of Doreen's practical theory of CLT is that it indicates only the presence or absence, partial or otherwise, of commonly listed features of CLT in Doreen's practical theory. It offers no accurate indication of the strength or potency of Doreen's commitment to these features, either intellectually or in practice. While this could be a significant limitation of this approach, it has been addressed to some extent by the study of the two video-taped lessons taught by Doreen. Such an examination revealed a high level of compliance between her classroom practice and practical theory. Moreover, no practices could be found that were in conflict with the ten common features of CLT.

### 9.3 Adequacy of the framework adapted from Joyce and Weil's model for describing ways of teaching for representing teachers' practical theories of CLT

Within available texts covering conceptual analyses of CLT and prescriptive advice for teachers on the use of CLT approaches, no accounts of CLT were found which were as comprehensive as the practical theory account based on the Joyce and Weil framework. For this reason alone, the framework used in this study may well provide a valuable alternative to existing accounts of CLT approaches, one that extends and enriches current descriptions of CLT. How well practical theories might fulfil the needs of teachers wishing to adopt CLT approaches is an open question, though the popularity in teacher education circles of the Joyce and Weil model of teaching framework perhaps provides some cause for confidence.

A second way of seeking an answer to this question is to examine the framework itself. Though many of the dimensions of teaching are included, the research team noted that there were no explicit references to the

place of testing (or assessment/evaluation), an integral part of teaching, within the model of teaching framework. It was also noted that Joyce and Weil applied the notion of 'principle' restrictively to teacher reactions to students only. However, research on teacher thinking has also identified teacher references to principles relating to other facets of classroom life such as use of time, power sharing, order of teacher contacts with students during lessons and when to be strategically lenient and discriminate in favour of disadvantaged students (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Attempts were made in interviews to redress these missing elements.

In addition, the account of Doreen's practical theory contains no details of the phasing or sequencing of activities, one of the basic constructs in the Joyce and Weil framework. This was the result of a deliberate choice to limit teacher disclosure of strategies used in CLT lessons to a general description of strategies rather than pursuing details of the phasing of activities within each strategy. Limitations on interview time did not allow the latter.

Another way of assessing the adequacy of the framework used in this study for documenting teachers' practical theories would be to seek teacher input on this issue. The fact that the teacher in this study was unable to nominate any gaps in the framework, is encouraging. Although this favourable evidence provides a promising start, it is admittedly limited and inputs from many other teachers are needed. Two additional sources of input on this issue would be readers of this paper and teachers using examples of practical theories, such as Doreen's, to acquire expertise in the use of a CLT approach. Until such evidence is in, resolution of this issue will have to be deferred.

Overall, this case study has shown that Doreen could be regarded as a communicatively-oriented LOTE teacher, who shows a good understanding of the main features that underpin communicative approaches of teaching a second language in the classroom. It has also shown that the Joyce and Weil framework, which is commonly used in pre- and in-service teacher education, captures many insights into a teacher's practical theory of CLT. The framework has the added advantage that it provides the possibilities for a more fine-grained description of a teacher's understanding of communicative approaches and for presenting a more comprehensive description of them in this approach to second language teaching.

#### 9 4 Implications for Research on Teacher Thinking

Hopefully, the research outlined in this paper will encourage an extension of research into teachers' knowledge and understanding of Communicative Language Teaching. Finding answers to questions about the extent to which teachers understand and use CLT approaches or, for that matter, other innovative pedagogies, is an activity that must be pursued in the interests of learners, teachers, teacher educators and

society as a whole. A further hope is that this paper might also re-ignite an interest in the nature of teachers' practical theories of teaching in general. To date, insufficient attention has been paid to questions about the range, structure and kinds of practical theories held by teachers. Currently, literature in this field provides few broad, well-researched conceptualisations of practical theories of teaching. Nor does it provide many exemplars of teachers' theories that illustrate the scope and complexity of the practical knowledge that guides classroom practice. A range of conceptualisations and exemplars, rich in detail, broad in scope and sufficiently complex to allow more complete representations of teachers' theories is needed to provide both pre- and in-service teachers with frameworks and models that they can adapt to articulate their own personal practical theories. This need is all the more urgent given the contemporary, widespread acknowledgment of the important role that practical theories play in shaping practice, learning to teach and determining the effectiveness of teachers.

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Please add acknowledgements here
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**Table 1**

**Relationship of Interview Questions to Features in the Joyce & Weil Model**

<b>Features of Joyce &amp; Weil Model</b>	<b>Focus of Interview Questions about CLT approaches</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal Focus – main goals of lesson(s), unit;</li><li>• Assumptions, principles and major concepts underlying the model</li><li>• Syntax – the sequence of lesson phases</li> <li>• Social System – roles of teacher and students, teacher-student relationships, norms of student behaviors</li><li>• Principles of teacher reaction – how to regard learners and how to respond to what learners do</li><li>• Support System – additional requirements beyond usual human skills, capacities and technical facilities</li><li>• Instructional and Nurturant Effects – outcomes, both direct and implicit, of the model</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aims</li><li>• Beliefs, values, principles underpinning CLT approaches</li><li>• (Interviews did not focus on this feature because CLT approaches involve a range of instructional strategies; instead interviewees were invited to discuss strategies, methods or tactics they regarded as consistent with CLT.)</li><li>• Teacher and student roles, relationships, preferred student behaviors (cues, normal desirable states)</li><li>• Principles of teacher reaction</li> <li>• Special teacher attributes, skills required in CLT lessons; special resources used in CLT lessons.</li><li>• Main outcomes (cognitive, affective, skill) - planned and unplanned</li><li>• Metaphors, images appropriate to CLT approach</li></ul>

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