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***Context-Appropriate ELT
Pedagogy: An Investigation in
Cameroonian Primary Schools***

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in
English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

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*To my father, Simon Mua Kuchah
...and my youngest sister, Hilda...*

*....that they may dwell with the saints, knowing the race was
won....*

*...and
to Michael D. Nama and Paul N. Mbangwana
...with whose candles, these corridor was lit.*

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation, assignment, or report submitted to this University or elsewhere for a degree, diploma, or any other qualifications.

Harry Kuchah Kuchah

Abstract

Over the last two decades, many ELT professionals and researchers have called for contextually appropriate forms of ELT pedagogy to be developed, arguing that the dominant discourse on ELT methodology, as promoted by local Ministry of Education (MoE) policy makers around the world, has been largely generated in ideal (North) contexts and so does not reflect the challenging realities of the majority of language teaching and learning contexts in which they are being imposed.

Despite these calls, there has been very little research that shows how contextually appropriate ELT pedagogies can be developed. To fill this gap, there is a need for research that develops from the bottom-up by relying on input from teachers and learners who constitute the major stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. This study, therefore, set out to investigate students' and teachers' perspectives regarding what counted as good and appropriate English language teaching in two English medium primary school contexts in Cameroon. To achieve this, data was collected through classroom observation, friendship group interviews with children and stimulated recall with teachers from six English medium primary schools from Yaounde and Buea. A further two-day workshop group discussion based on videoed lessons from the six classrooms was organised with 30 teachers in both research sites.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers and students possess shared, but also - in some respects - divergent notions of good/appropriate ELT pedagogy which are largely different from MoE enforced methodological procedure, and it is these notions - rather than what the Ministry says - that have the biggest impact on their experiences and practices. The study also revealed that, in exploring insights into their, as well as students' perspectives on good teaching, teachers in the workshops were able to develop new ideas about appropriate teaching which took on board ideas from children's perspectives as well as successful practices from the videoed lessons of their colleagues. These findings highlight the potential contribution of a bottom-up research approach to teacher development which takes account of context in the process of generating and disseminating good practice.

Prologue

The following study has been motivated by a number of events and experiences in my own professional life in Cameroon where I have worked in different capacities for fourteen years now. During these years I have had the opportunity not only to teach young learners and teenagers in state schools, but also to work as teacher trainer for primary school teachers and as pedagogic inspector and language pedagogy policy maker at ministry level. As an influential member of my national teachers' association (CAMELTA), I have also endeavoured to dissipate the hierarchical positioning that my job at the ministry imposes between teachers and myself by connecting with these teachers within our community of practitioners in ways that are non-hierarchical. The experiences derived from this professional career have therefore been diverse and enriching especially because I have been able to gain insights into the practices of different teachers from different parts of the same country and to understand how they respond to the different challenges of their profession. What is more, my own practice as a teacher and teacher trainer has evolved over the years not only because of the experience gained through time, but also because of the significant cultural and even religious differences of each of the contexts in which I have worked in Cameroon.

In Cameroon Teacher Trainers for primary schools do not necessarily emerge from a successful and lengthy teaching career as they do in other places like the UK. Rather, they are trained as an elite group at a rather young age and with or without any prior teaching experience although appointment to more decision making roles like pedagogic inspectors would be a result of some considerable experience either as a secondary school teacher, or as a teacher trainer at primary level. Upon graduation from university,

I was selected to train as a Teacher Trainer. My training essentially focused on theories related to teaching and learning mostly derived from the field of psychology, especially cognitive development, child and adolescent psychology as well as educational policy and planning, professional ethics and deontology with an ELT input that broadly reviewed different language teaching methods, insisting on the strengths of the communicative approach and an eclectic method of teaching. A research component was also included in my training but this was based on quantitative methods of research emphasising experimentation and questionnaire research. Within my two years of training, only two months were allocated for teaching practice. Teaching practice consisted of teaching academic subject content to trainees in the teacher training colleges for primary school teachers under the supervision of a co-operating Trainer who was the regular tutor of the particular subject. Exceptionally (and uniquely too) local authorities in Bamenda imposed on us an additional component which was to spend our first month teaching primary school children (under the supervision of the class teacher) so as to have some hands on experience which they hoped will help us in teaching trainee teachers. This was not the case with our classmates who trained in other parts of the country. The two months spent in practice exposed me to another reality. Not only did the regional pedagogic inspectors and school administrators assigned to support and assess our training make us realise how little trained we were, but they referred to us openly as theoreticians and seized the slightest opportunity to ridicule any one of us who had problems with our teaching.

It must be said, however, that a good number of the Cooperating Teachers and Trainers did sympathise with us and offered extra support whenever needed although their support was only limited to the content and methodology of their subject areas and

classroom management issues. In the Government Teachers Training College in Bamenda where I was assigned to do my practice, we were in all 14 trainees. This meant that we could not possibly teach English language in the four classes to which we were assigned. We had to teach other subjects to be able to have a considerable number of teaching hours per week. So it was that I was assigned to teach psychology (for 4 hours a week), Statistics (two hours a week) and Literature in English (45 minutes a week). For a trainee, training to become an English language teacher trainer in the future, this was, to say the least, frustrating. Although at the end of my training I benefitted a lot from the support of the three Cooperating Trainers whose subjects I taught as well as from the Cooperating teacher in whose primary school classroom I spent my first month of practice, this was not enough to qualify me as an English teacher and teacher trainer.

In 1996, upon graduation from the Higher Teacher Training College, and with no substantial classroom experience of my own, I was sent to teach English language and Language teaching methodology to trainees in a French-medium teacher training college in the north of Cameroon. As their language proficiency was very low, I spent most of my time teaching the English language. Another baffling reality was not only that all my students were older than me but also that cultural and to an extent religious values were largely different from those in my regions of training and upbringing. There was, for example a strong awareness of age differences that influenced classroom interaction and the power relationship within the classroom. It was therefore impossible for me to apply certain forms of discipline that I would have applied in a classroom in Bamenda, for example. The low proficiency of my trainees, together with the challenges of classroom management imposed upon me by their age and culture helped me to review my teaching strategies. For the ELT component of their training therefore, instead of

providing them with theories, I focused more on classroom observation and analysis. Sometimes we observed teachers in the practising primary schools attached to the training college; sometimes I volunteered to be observed teaching English in these primary schools myself, but most often I encouraged trainees not only to observe my own English lessons but to criticise my practice. This helped in a way to encourage my trainees to take the challenge of presenting their own English lessons to their classmates. If their trainer could accept criticism then they too could attempt to teach without being afraid to be criticised. On my part, volunteering to teach English in both primary and nursery schools enabled me gain more experience and insights about the real issues involved at this level and in a sense enriched my approach to Pre-service teacher training. While this was happening in my school, I cannot claim that the same thing happened in other schools, especially as I never had the opportunity to observe or be observed by another teacher trainer or even a regional inspector during the seven years I spent in the training college.

Nor can I claim to have been completely fulfilled in the situation I have described above and that is why in September 2000, with two additional trainers sent to my college, I seized the opportunity to teach English on a part time basis to teenagers in a neighbouring secondary school. The experiences acquired from teaching younger learners (see Kuchah & Smith, 2011) were different, enriching and fulfilling and these, together with my experience with my trainees as well as my affiliation to the Cameroon English Language and Literature Teacher's Association, CAMELTA helped to shape my vision of my profession as a teacher and teacher trainer, but also of my eventual role as pedagogic inspector (see Kuchah, 2008 for details of my professional development and vision).

In 2006-2007 I studied for an MA in EYL at the University of Warwick and had the opportunity to reflect back on my practice as a teacher and teacher trainer. My encounter, for the first time in my professional career, with sociocultural psychology and the discourse of Learner Autonomy made me realise that there were theoretical connections to my practice that I was hitherto not aware of. My practice with my teenage students in the north of Cameroon has since May 2007 gained recognition within the learner autonomy community although I was unaware of the concept at the time of my teaching. In Kuchah & Smith, (2011) we refer to my early practice as a pedagogy *of* autonomy as different from a pedagogy *for* autonomy which is a more conscious and deliberately autonomy-oriented pedagogy.

From working with teachers over the years, I have come to realise that my story is not unique. Cameroonian teachers work in very difficult circumstances, some of which are inconceivable to teachers in other parts of the world. With an initial training that is hardly reflective of the realities in the field, with classes of more than 100 pupils from a multiplicity of first language backgrounds, with the near absence of prescribed course books and pupils learning in very high temperatures; with only blackboard and chalk in a world where technological advancements are influencing classroom cultures elsewhere, many Cameroonian teachers are still able to continue to achieve through creative ways that respond to the realities of their working contexts. Working with these teachers over the years, I have come to the realisation that there are many teachers whose practices are the outcome, not of their training, but of their own responses to their previous experiences as learners as well as their particular contexts and classroom cultures and though pedagogic authorities may not approve of their practices on the basis

of set down policies, there is no doubt that their learners are benefitting from these practices. My own professional development has been characterised by an interplay of experiential knowledge and theoretical knowledge, lived knowledge and learned knowledge, received wisdom and informed wisdom with the latter directing the former and the former correcting and reconstructing the latter in enormously significant ways. It is this professional experience that has developed in me a sense of empathy and respect for Cameroonian teachers and as such has impacted on my role as pedagogic inspector and policy maker whose responsibility it is to empower and support the development of these teachers who struggle to resolve the day-to-day conundrums of their profession in creative and innovative ways which are unfortunately never recognised or codified into the public domain.

This study is divided into nine chapters addressing different parts of the research project. In Chapter One, I describe the educational sub-systems of Cameroon and situate English language and ELT in the primary school curriculum. In Chapter Two, I explore and analyse literature related to theory/practice disconnections and reasons for these, the discourse of methods and postmethod, the discourse of best practice, classroom practice in difficult circumstances as well as issues and developments in innovation and change management amongst others. The third chapter describes the research design and methodological procedure for participant selection, data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents findings from students' perspectives about what constitutes good practice in language teaching; Chapter Five deals with findings related to teachers' justifications for adopting practices that are not aligned to MoE recommended methodology while in Chapter Six, teachers' perspectives of good and contextually appropriate pedagogic practices are presented. Chapter Seven presents findings on the teachers' perspectives in

relation to their experience of taking part in a research workshop while Chapter Eight discusses the major findings of the study in the light of their contribution to our understanding of the complexities of identifying, defining, and disseminating contextually appropriate practice. Chapter Nine, summarises the research findings and outlines the main contributions, to knowledge and research methodology, of this study. It also discusses the implications and limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future research in this area.

Chapter one

Introduction to the Study

1.0. Introduction

This study sets out to investigate features of context-appropriate methodology in under-resourced large classes in two English medium primary school contexts in Cameroon. It seeks to identify, through observation of classroom practice, and interaction with both teachers and learners, what elements of ELT pedagogy can be defined as contextually plausible (Prabhu, 1990). My goal is to draw from the perceptions and actual classroom practices of practitioners and learners, hitherto neglected by policy makers in my context, to inform a possible framework for incorporating pedagogic innovation in the future.

1.1. Background to the context and medium of instruction

Historically, Cameroon became a trustee territory divided between France and Britain after the collapse of Germany in World War II. Two of its present ten regions (the South West and the North West regions) were governed by the British and jointly referred to as the Southern Cameroons (SC), while the other eight regions were governed by the French under the name, La République du Cameroun (LRC) (see Ngoh, 1998). Following Kachru's (1985) framework of concentric circles of World Englishes, SC falls within the outer circle because formal education in this territory was initiated and influenced entirely by Britain (see Tambo, 2000; Nwana, 2000) imposing English as an additional language and medium of instruction in the same way as French was used in LRC. After independence in 1961, whereas some African countries insisted on the use of an indigenous language as language of instruction in the early years of formal education

(see Omodiaogbe, 1992), Cameroonian authorities elected to relegate its over 258 indigenous languages in favour of colonial languages, English and French, in the now Anglophone and Francophone parts of the country respectively. This went on until 1972 when both parts of Cameroon agreed by referendum to become 'The United Republic of Cameroon'. Unification meant that Cameroonians from the Anglophone parts of Cameroon now took up jobs in the Francophone parts while Francophones also worked in Anglophone parts. With the increase of Anglophones in French speaking parts of Cameroon (notably in Douala and Yaounde, for economic and administrative reasons respectively) came a rise in the demand for English medium education (see Ngoh, 2000). English medium schools were thus opened in French speaking parts of Cameroon and French medium schools, in the English speaking parts. In addition, English and French became compulsory subjects in French and English medium secondary schools across the country. The institution of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Francophone Cameroon meant that this part of the united country could be described as belonging to the expanding circles of Krachu's (1986) framework of concentric circles of World Englishes. In 1995, a National Forum on Education was convened with the aim of defining the watershed between the past educational system and a new, more dynamic and more relevant system which would help Cameroon take up the challenges of the twenty first century and solve the major problems plaguing its society. This forum paved the way for the 1998 Education Law which, amongst other things, reaffirmed the existence, in Cameroon, of the 'English-speaking' and the 'French-speaking' subsystems of education and stating in article 15 (2) that "the two educational systems shall co-exist with either maintaining its specificity in methods of assessment and certification." The 1998 Law also re-instituted official bilingualism, that is, English and French at all levels of French and English medium schools respectively.

The linguistic situation in English medium schools (the focus of this study) has never been straightforward; the multilingual nature of Cameroon means that learners come to school with different mother tongues. This is even more complicated in English medium schools in francophone regions where teachers have the added challenge of grappling with learners who are influenced both by their native languages and by French. What is more, teachers are not allowed to use any other language than English in school (Alobwede 1998; Kouega, 2001; Kuchah, 2009) and this, in a way, influences their own perception of the language situation in Cameroon to the extent that teachers and students believe the use of an indigenous language in school is wrong and ‘uneducated’ (see Esch, 2010; Kuchah & Pinter 2012).

1.2. English medium primary school curriculum

In the foreword to the *National Syllabuses for English Speaking Primary Schools in Cameroon*, (2000) (hereafter referred to as *The Syllabus*) the then Minister of National education explains the developments that led to the final product. He traces the origins of the new syllabuses to as far back as 1967 when Government goals on Education Reforms in Primary Schools were based on the philosophy of “ruralization of education” and then to the 1995 National Forum on Education which addressed, as issues of relevance, “decentralization and efficiency”. The new syllabuses define the scope and sequence of all subject areas, modify the timetable to fit into a 6 year period (down from 7 years of primary education before then), and propose the methodology, objectives, contents and methods of assessment. According to the document

...the primary school curriculum in Cameroon should not only focus on the traditional school subjects but must include global concerns such as human rights, environmental education, democracy, peace education, civil defence, moral

education and HIV/AIDS. To integrate these concerns...the principles of integration, separate subjects, broad fields and interdisciplinary designs have been applied by the designers (The Syllabus, 2000, p. iii).

In all, there are 17 subjects in the English medium primary school curriculum, 13 of which are taught in all classes and the other 4 at different levels. The operational principles for integrating these subjects are illustrated in the theoretical framework of the document which focuses on redesigning competency-based assessment methods with the aim of ‘producing’ primary school leavers who:

- have basic societal functional skills
- display a mastery of the course content for certification of achievement (e.g. FSLC)
- show a mastery of course content for selection e.g. Common Entrance (to secondary school)
- are imbued with the philosophy of national integration in their actions.

Of these four aims, those related to examinations, selection and certification are probably preponderant because parents, teachers, schools and the Cameroonian society as a whole are more inclined to rating the value of the education acquired by performance in the two end-of-course examinations than they would be with the actual abilities of young learners to interact harmoniously within the society. Private schools for example brandish percentage scores in official examinations as a way of attracting parents to entrust the education of their children into their hands in the same way as head teachers tend to determine teachers of final year classes on the basis of how well they can help learners obtain good results in examinations.

1.3. The place of English language in the curriculum

In addition to being the sole medium of instruction for all subjects in English medium schools, English language is also a subject of very high importance in the curriculum. It is one of the 13 subjects taught through all levels of primary education. Numerically, English language as a subject occupies 21.67% of the total weekly teaching time alongside mathematics. As *The Syllabus* notes, ‘the mastery of English by the pupil enables him or her to grasp with ease the other subjects of the curriculum’ (p.1) or conversely, to fail if his/her English is not up to the needed level. Because in addition to being one of the two official languages of instruction, English language serves as a language for office and business transactions, *The Syllabus* insists that

...the primary school pupil must acquire a good command of the language at four levels: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This will help the pupil to work and use English efficiently in the Cameroon society and the world at large, besides using it as an essential tool for research, trade and communication (p.1)

To achieve this, *The Syllabus* states that after six years of schooling the primary school pupil would be able to:

- *communicate his feelings, ideas and experiences both orally and in writing,*
- *listen attentively to utterances, stories, news items, instructions, poems and songs and respond correctly to them orally and in writing,*
- *communicate correctly his/her ideas, feelings and experiences orally,*
- *read and understand authentic documents,*
- *write correct sentences or/and texts,*
- *further his/her education,*
- *pass the FSLC and Common Entrance examinations,*
- *integrate actively in society with ease,*
- *behave well individually and in a group.*

1.4. The Learners and the learning context

The normal age for admission into the first year of primary school in Cameroon is 6 years at the time of entry although there is provision to accept children who are not yet 6 provided by 31 December of the year of entry, they are 6. Another special case is that of

children above the age of 6 but not older than 8 years. This means that generally, in the final year of primary education, learners are between the ages of 11 and 13. These figures are merely representative as it is possible to find younger and older children depending on the locality in which the school is situated (see Head teachers' Guide of the Ministry of National Education, 1999, henceforth referred to as *The Guide*).

The learning context in state primary schools in Cameroon is generally characterised by classrooms with large numbers of learners from a multiplicity of ethnic and L1 backgrounds. In its efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals of Education For All, Cameroon instituted free and compulsory primary education in 1998 making it possible and even imperative for all children of school-going age to enter primary schools. However, this decision was neither accompanied by the systematic construction of the required number of new schools, nor by the recruitment of the required number of teachers, hence only four years after the implementation of this decision, the primary education growth enrolment ratio rose to more than 70% in Cameroon (UNESCO, 2002) increasing to unbearable levels the number of children in the available schools. It was not until 2005 that, with the help of international financial institutions, the government started recruiting trained teachers, reducing the pupil-teacher ratio from 125:1 in 2005 to 72:1 in 2008. The World Bank statistics for 2010 (World Bank 2011a) put the pupil-teacher ratio at 47:1 but as O'Sullivan (2006) has pointed out, pupil-teacher ratios do not provide an adequate reflection of class size because they are derived by dividing the number of teachers in a country by the number of pupils. This can be very misleading especially when one considers that in Cameroon it is common to find more than one teacher in a class in urban schools while there is a serious lack of teachers in rural schools. Where there exist two teachers in a class like in schools in Yaounde, they tend

to teach separate subjects or on separate days, thus their numerical presence serves no extra purpose. In fact, there are still many urban and rural state schools with classroom sizes of more than 100 pupils and multi-grade classes in rural areas where there is an acute shortage of teachers. Thus, in many state primary schools, pupils are crammed into benches and classrooms which are meant to take fewer learners.

Added to the problem of large classes is the lack of textbooks on the part of learners whose parents, because of poverty can hardly afford books for their children. The population of Cameroonians living under the poverty limit is 48% (World Bank, 2011b). In Education Priority Zones - that is, those parts of the country where strong cultural factors discourage the education of young children, especially girls – the state provides English, French and maths textbooks but these are generally not in appropriate quantities. Besides, the books belong to schools and children are not allowed to take them home. The state also provides a ‘Minimum Package’ to schools every year consisting of chalk, stationery and a scanty distribution of materials which are often not appropriate to the needs of specific schools, because they are not selected on the basis of informed decisions about what each school needs, but on the basis of what the private business organisations who take up the contracts to provide these materials decide to provide. Added to the paucity of appropriate instructional materials is the absence of modern technological equipment as well as other constraints resulting from a heavily loaded curriculum, a disrupting and time-consuming regular 6-weekly (‘sequential’) evaluation system (Tante, 2007) and two high stakes end-of-primary examinations.

1.5. The teachers

Primary school teachers in Cameroon are generally secondary school graduates with either the GCE Ordinary or Advanced levels. Admission into the teacher training college is open to three categories of school leavers and the entry qualification determines the number of years to be spent in training as follows:

Table1: TTC entry qualifications, years of training and duration of practice teaching

Entry qualification	Number of years in training	Duration of teaching practice
GCE Advanced Levels	9 months (usually less, as admission starts late)	2 weeks plus an extra week before evaluation.
GCE Ordinary Levels in at least 5 subjects	2 years	4 weeks plus an extra week before evaluation
GCE Ordinary levels in 3 papers (usually considered as failed)	3 years	6 weeks plus an extra week before evaluation.

There are no recommendations for the subjects a candidate needs to have passed in the GCE; thus a candidate who passes in Religion, French and Food & Nutrition for example is qualified to sit for the entrance examination. The entrance examination on its part is made up of three subjects: English, French and Mathematics, with no minimum mark required for any of the subjects. This is problematic because with a fail in two subjects and a pass in one, a candidate can still be successful provided the total average mark meets the selection limits which varies from region to region. There is no doubt therefore that English medium primary school teachers often have language proficiency problems although they may be competent in other subject content like mathematics.

Added to the rather problematic entry conditions explained above is the fact that course content for teacher training at this level is predominantly theoretical, most often the same as course content for teacher-trainers at the post-graduate level. What is more,

because primary school teachers are expected to teach all subjects of the curriculum including French, it is unlikely that they will encounter a vast amount of theoretical and practical requirements in the different subject areas during their relatively short training. Even within the few weeks devoted to practice teaching, it is not possible for a student teacher to have full control over a classroom. This is explained by the fact that there exists a limited number of ‘Practicing Schools’ attached to each training college and as such it is not often possible to assign less than five student teachers to a classroom. The consequence is that trainees end up with only a limited number of teaching hours per week and consequently limited exposure to classroom reality during the few weeks of practice teaching. Consequently, upon graduation, trainees still lack a sound grasp of practical experience and the absence of a structured institutional mechanism to support novice teachers may force them to revert to traditional practices or to follow their intuitive responses to immediate realities.

1.6. Methodological developments

The 1995 Forum gave rise to a number of important educational reforms which led to the development of new syllabuses for both French medium and English medium primary schools in 1998 and 2000 respectively. One of the goals of these syllabuses was to “train citizens who are firmly rooted in their cultures, but open to the world and respectful of the general interest and the common weal” (Law on Education, 1998, Section 5). At the methodological level, *The Syllabus* recommends, for each subject, specific (micro-level) teaching strategies which are supposed to complement the macro-level methodological procedure – the New Pedagogic Approach (NPA) – presented in *The Guide*.

1.6.1. Micro-level strategies for English language.

The English language syllabus recommends that teachers should:

- *Create avenues for maximum exposure of the pupil to English; this entails that English should be taught in English.*
- *Use participatory methods (e.g. communicative method, Eclectic method, Integrated approach, Language experience approach, whole language approach, sentence method, word method, syllabic method, look and say method, synthetic and analytical approach, matching, sound and word building etc) to enable the pupil acquire the language easily.*
- *Use stories, rhymes, poems and songs to facilitate language acquisition.*
- *Revise previous notions/concepts/structures before passing onto the new ones.*
- *Use an interdisciplinary approach to facilitate transfer of knowledge*
- *Teach grammatical structures in a functional way.*
- *Make use of real objects, pictures, charts, drawings, flashcards, resource persons, authentic documents (The Syllabus, pp.17-18)*

However, the syllabus does not provide information/guidelines as to where and how teachers are to find and use the recommended materials, nor does it address the fundamental problems of the lack of resources and the very large classes. What is more, because the NPA is the overriding methodological approach in the discourse of both pre-service and in-service training, the strategies listed above tend to be under-emphasised, at both the theoretical and practical levels, in the training of primary school teachers since their practices are measured on the basis of their adherence to the steps of the NPA.

1.6.2. Macro-level methodology: The New Pedagogic Approach (NPA)

Since 1998, the MoE has maintained methodological homogeneity through the implementation of the NPA, a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching all subjects of the primary curriculum developed with input from the American Peace Corps services in Cameroon (Tenjoh-Okwen 1996). The 1999 Head Teachers' Guide presents the NPA as a departure from the traditional teacher-centred approach that had permeated the

educational culture for a long time. The official criticism of the traditional approaches to teaching states that:

In primary schools, the levels of thinking primarily sought are the memory, understanding and application. The teacher, regarded as the sole custodian of knowledge, monopolises the floor, brings up formulae and carries out experiments; thus pedagogic activity is all focused on him. He considers the brain of the pupils as an “empty vessel” that needs to be filled. He fills the head rather than properly mould the brain. This practice is far from being satisfactory as it does not involve analysis, synthesis and evaluation. (The Guide, 1999, p. 72)

The NPA on its part is meant to develop and encourage, in the learner, an inferential mind which is described as:

... that intellectual activity which consists in establishing the relationships between facts and ideas, stating hypotheses, making out understatements, verifying hypotheses, drawing conclusions; in short, developing logical thinking in the child. Thinking is for the child a way of adapting to reality, that is understanding it, explaining it and recreating the universe by himself. The child should thus have a quite objective mind capable of analysing and foreseeing for such adaptation to reality to be effective, that is, likely to help the child ... to strive at transforming the world to satisfy his needs (Ibid, p. 72)

The NPA methodological procedure for all subjects in the curriculum consists of a sequence of 5 stages: ‘Problem Situation and Hypotheses’, ‘Research’, ‘Verification of hypotheses’, ‘Generalisation’ and ‘Evaluation.’ *The Guide* provides three sample lesson templates in Maths, Science and Reading to illustrate the methodological procedure for each lesson. The reading lesson template – ‘The New Reading Approach’ – consists of five stages including (i) ‘stating hypothesis’ (ii) ‘silent reading’, (iii) ‘verification of hypotheses’, (iv) ‘reading aloud’ and (v) ‘written exercise’ (p.74). Simply put, these stages could correspond to (i) a (pre-reading) picture discussion in which students predict content of text, (ii) a silent reading phase followed by (iii) another discussion to check/revise initial predictions, (iv) a reading aloud phase and (v) an evaluation phase in which students answer comprehension questions. The central claim made for the NPA in

language teaching is that it is an essentially learner-centred procedure designed to facilitate and enhance communication in the language classroom. Despite being documented as shown above, there are significant differences in the number of stages, appellation, and internal content of NPA stages amongst teachers across the country. In addition to these inconsistencies, the insistence of the NPA rhetoric on the learner has been, to say the least, a challenge not only to older teachers trained in the tradition of teacher-centred pedagogies, but also to the younger generation of teachers whose training, as I have described above, is heavily theoretical.

Several other pedagogic ideas and practices such as 'Project pedagogy', 'Hands on/ minds on', 'Concept pedagogy', 'Mastery learning', 'Discovery learning', 'Pedagogy of integration', and 'New vision of evaluation' (with washback on teaching) have emerged and disappeared from the MoE rhetoric since 1998 despite being promoted at different times as complementary to the NPA. The only enduring pedagogic addition has been the Competence-Based Approach (CBA) - a derivation from Competency Based Education and training (CBET) promoted in the USA in the mid 1960s (Tuxworth 1989) especially in the domain of vocational and further education (Burke, 1989) - which seems to further complicate the demands on teachers not only because they perceive it as another method to be added to the not-yet-appropriated NPA, but because the rhetoric around the CBA has been diverse and sometimes controversial. While there is an official statement on the NPA (*The Guide* 1999) there is no official document clearly defining the CBA. This is because the CBA is essentially an approach that has been introduced into the educational system by funding organizations like the African Development Bank (through the Education II project), the Islamic Bank, Plan Cameroon and UNESCO. Consequently there seem to be three parallel perceptions of the CBA that have been developed by

experts brought in by these organizations from different countries, notably, France, Canada and Belgium. Amongst pedagogic supervisors therefore there is no agreement as to which of these ‘versions’ of the CBA should be applicable in all schools although they agree that the CBA should complement the NPA. As such, the version of the CBA transmitted to trainees during PRESET and INSETT is largely determined by the individual trainer’s beliefs so that the more trainers a teacher meets, the more ‘versions’ of the CBA he/she encounters making it even more challenging for him. A recent study commissioned by the Ministry of Basic Education (CONAP, 2008) suggests that a major problem plaguing the Cameroonian educational system is its heavy dependence on pedagogic innovation imported, without consideration of local reality, into the system from donor organisations and transmitted to teachers whose fundamental training is at odds with such innovations. The study questions the validity of the several pedagogic policy modifications over the last decade concluding that a constant search for better pedagogic practices is evidence of the inapplicability of previous imported concepts within the Cameroonian educational system and goes on to suggest the elaboration of an institutional framework for pedagogic reforms that builds on the ecological reality of the Cameroonian context.

1.7. In-service teacher training

In-service teacher training in Cameroon is conducted at national, regional and local levels through a process of cascading. National Pedagogic Inspectors organise occasional seminars, during which regional inspectors are schooled in innovative ideas and practices. This is then cascaded down to practitioners usually by Regional Pedagogic Inspectors, Divisional Advisers and Head teachers. At the regional level, in-service training takes place in the form of locally organised workshops at least once

every year during the first term of the school year. These workshops focus mainly on writing lesson plans for different subject areas following the lesson stages of the NPA and CBA. During these workshops, pedagogic inspectors lecture head teachers about whatever lesson planning stages/ideas are promoted at the time. Participants are then expected to work in groups to draw lesson plans in different subject areas, incorporating the ‘new’ knowledge acquired and to present these in plenary for general criticism, modification and adoption. As these workshops are based on each individual inspector’s understanding of the NPA and the CBA, open conflicts between inspectors during the workshops are not uncommon, nor is it atypical to see lesson stages with different designations and content in different parts of the country. Head teachers then have the responsibility of training their teachers on the ‘latest’ methodological developments. Most often, Head teachers of a group of schools, under a Divisional Inspectorate team up to organise joined workshops with invited Regional Inspectors and Divisional Advisers where teachers are drilled on how to develop lesson plans and lectured on the theoretical considerations underlying each stage of a lesson plan with the hope that this will lead to effective classroom practice.

The preponderance of the NPA over subject-level strategies of language teaching (see 1.6.1) entails paying little attention to current methodological developments in language teaching on the global scale. Developments in communicative language teaching, for example, hardly constitute part of the pre-service or in-service agenda for primary school teachers. A common feature of the literature on English language teaching to young learners (TEYL) is the predominant use of ‘activities’ rather than methods (cf Garton, Copland & Burns 2011) suggesting that TEYL experts seem to agree that young learners learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process. Yet, despite

the existence of a repertoire of practices promoted in the TEYL literature including ‘creative’ activities like hearing and telling stories, (Ahlquist, 2012; Brewster, Ellis and Girard 1992; Ghosn 2002; Halliwell 1992; Gerngross and Putsch 1996; Çakirgu 2004; Láng 2009; Nunan 2011; Kolsawalla 1999; Lugossy, 2012; Mc Dermott, 2012; Pinter 2006), songs, rhymes and chants (Cakir 1999; Halliwell 1992; Kolsawalla 1999; Kuhiwczak 1999; Medina 2002; Homolová 2010, Nunan 2011; Scott 1980) ‘doing’ activities like games, role-play and drama (Cameron 2001; Homolová 2010; Healy, 2012; Khan, 1991; Linse 2005; Moon 2000; Rixon, 1991; Pinter 2006; 2007; Putcha 2007) and other fun activities like drawing, moving around, ordering (Gordon 2007; Halliwell 1992; Homolová 2010; Nunan 2011; Pinter 2006; 2011) these practices are hardly ever mentioned in the discourse of teacher training in Cameroon. Nor do teacher trainers and pedagogic authorities take account of teachers and learners’ perspectives and experiences of the various constraints of classroom realities (see 1.4 & 1.5 above) into consideration in the conception, enactment and dissemination of pedagogic policy. Instead, teachers are made to perceive the teaching of English language in the primary school as essentially the same as the teaching of other subjects of the curriculum.

1.8. Research Questions.

The pedagogic perplexities I have presented above led to the conception of this research project whose guiding questions are:

1. What are young learners’ perceptions of good English language teaching practices?
2. What do teachers perceive as appropriate teaching practices within their working context?

3. What are teacher-participants' perceptions of their workshop experience of exploring insights into good/appropriate teaching practices?

The answers to these questions, I think, will provide input for an eventual framework for developing and disseminating context appropriate pedagogies for large, multilingual and under-resourced classroom contexts.

Chapter two

Review of Literature

2.1. Introduction

The Cameroonian educational system, as I have shown in the previous section, is fraught with problems and challenges, some of which, albeit inexistent in many educational contexts in the North, are familiar to other developing country contexts. In this chapter, I discuss the major developments in ELT research and policy implementation as well as language teacher training and development to show how and why it may be necessary to map out a more relevant research model that responds to the contextual variations and challenges of the fast growing ELT world. I start by reviewing literature on language pedagogy policy/practice mismatches and the reasons for these; then I examine developments in ELT methodology and the post-methods discourse in the light of their failure to address the specific needs of different ELT contexts. The concept of ‘best practice’ in ELT is also re-examined in order to show how language teaching in otherwise underprivileged/difficult circumstances may render superfluous attempts to develop methodological hegemony. In discussing the teaching of English in contexts in the South, I draw attention to the need for a sound research base that derives from the actual classroom practices and perspectives of learners and teachers to arrive at contextually appropriate ELT pedagogies. Such a bottom-up research process is justified by recent developments in the fields of sociology, anthropology and education that highlight the importance of learners’ agency as well as teacher cognition and agency in understanding social processes like language teaching and learning.

2.2. Policy/Practice tensions

Literature abounds on the problematic relationship between policy and practice in different areas of human life and education. In language planning, policy and pedagogy, there is a considerable amount of research that shows that disconnections between policy and pedagogic practices abound across different levels of education in different contexts all over the world. While the crux of the matter seems to manifest mostly in countries where English is not the first language, it is clear from research carried out in BANA countries (Holliday, 1994a) where English is the majority first language that language policy and classroom practice can also sometimes be very much at odds. Research carried out in some states in the US where legislation proscribed bilingual education (Varghese & Stritikus, 2005; Stritikus, 2003; Jong, Gort & Cobb, 2005; Maxwell-Jolly, 2000; Skilton-Sylvester, 2003) reveal that practitioners' understanding of policy, their beliefs and local contexts both influenced and accounted for the variations in how state-mandated policy was translated into practice. McLaughlin (1987) explains that this is because the dynamic character of the institutional settings in which implementation takes place influences and is in turn influenced by factors like local capacity and the willingness of educational actors to accommodate the policy. Such dynamism is at the centre of the variations that may exist in different settings, in the implementation of the same policy.

Research in non-BANA contexts suggests even more complex issues resulting from the impact of the spread of English on educational policy and practice. The extent to which teachers in these contexts understand or misunderstand policies and how these are translated in their classrooms has been a major preoccupation in ELT. Nunan's (2003) study of seven Asian countries (China, Hongkong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and

Vietnam) indicates that although the emergence of English as a global language is having considerable impact on policies and practices in all countries surveyed, there are significant problems, amongst other things, in the disjunction between curriculum rhetoric and pedagogical reality. Despite considerable country-by-country variations, data reveals that teacher education and English language skills of teachers in public-sector institutions in these countries are inadequate for the successful implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to which policy rhetoric subscribes. Nunan's findings are consistent with those of other studies in Japan (e.g., Kikuchi & Browne 2009; Yoshida 2003; Browne & Wada 1998; Gorsuch 2001; Butler & Iino 2005; Butler 2007), Singapore (e.g., Farrell & Kun's 2007), Turkey (e.g., Kirkgoz 2008), Brazil (e.g., Bohn 2003) Vietnam (e.g., Nguyen & Nguyen 2007; Nguyen 2011) Hong Kong (Carless 2003; 2004) and Thailand (e.g., Segovia & Hardison 2009; Johnson 1989) which examine teachers' practical responses to ministerial policy recommending communicative and learner-centred approaches to language teaching. The findings of these studies reveal that despite efforts by the various education authorities to promote innovative pedagogic practices through training, information dissemination, and language proficiency courses, there are still serious discrepancies between official discourse and classroom reality. The reasons for this are varied, ranging from the failure of policy makers to take into account factors like the existence of structural-based assessment demands, teachers' language proficiency, training levels especially for elementary level teaching, and limited understanding of certain policy decisions as well as the existing teacher-dependent classroom cultures amongst others.

In the African continent, a large amount of discussion has centred on language-in-development issues (see for example Brock-Utne 2010; Brock-Utne & Holmarsdotli 2001; Csapo 1983; Clegg & Afitska 2011; ; Cleghorn & Rollnick, 2002; Owu-Ewie 2006; Rubagumya 1997; Uys, van der Walt, van den Berg & Botha 2007; Williams 2006; Williams & Cooke, 2002; Vavrus, 2002) with researchers highlighting the different roles of L1 and L2 in facilitating or impeding cognitive, social and economic development. Yet as Cleghorn & Rollnick (2002) point out, insights from such research have failed to be incorporated into language-in-education policies or included in teacher education programs' (p. 348). Education related studies from Africa (e.g. Ampiah, 2008; CONAP 2008; Komba & Nkumbi, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2004; Tembe, 2006; Tchombe, 2004) tend to avoid the choice-of-language debate focusing on general education policy and practice, giving the impression that pedagogic policies designed for European languages can be treated as an integral part of the general educational discussion. Studies examining language teaching policy and practice in Africa, however, reveal incompatibilities between policies which are essentially imported from, or influence by, developments in the North and actual classroom practices in the South. As early as the early years of the independence of most African countries, Strevens (1956) noted:

The biggest language problem in Africa, it seems to me arises from the fact that new processes and techniques are spreading very rapidly over Africa, which may require for their successful and efficient use, a set of linguistic habits of a special sort. These linguistic habits do exist in the places where the processes and techniques come from, but they do not exist in large areas of Africa. (p.74)

In South Africa, for example Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004) report that the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach introduced in 1998 promoted student-centred teaching and the use of the communicative approach in ESL teaching, but results from data collected through classroom observations and interviews reveal that deficiencies and

ineffectiveness occur in many classrooms. Ampiah (2008) takes the discussion further by examining the practices of Ghanaian primary school teachers in the light of their adherence to recommended pedagogic practices and reveals that although the pedagogic prescriptions promote participatory teaching and learning, the main method of teaching observed in even the best schools in Ghana were 'Chalk and talk' with learners' participation limited to answering teacher questions. In the same light, O'Sullivan's (2002; 2004) case studies in Namibia reveal huge mismatches between teachers' practices and the policy requirements in terms of learner-centred education. In Uganda, the adoption of a communicative approach to teaching the English language places demands on teachers in terms of finding resources and being innovative, demands which they are unable to achieve due to low proficiency and confidence levels, crowded classrooms, lack of materials (Tembe 2006) as well as the lack of libraries and students' poor exposure to the English language usage (Muthwii, 2001). Over-crowded classrooms, lack of textbooks, low teacher proficiency and qualification and lack of financial and material resources, cultural factors and learner background (O'Sullivan 2004) as impediments to effective policy implementation are common themes in primary education pedagogy in Africa and as studies in Kenya (Sawamura & Sifuna, 2008), Niger (Goza et al., 2008) and Tanzania (Komba and Nkumbi 2008) suggest, this is exacerbated by the implementation of the Education for all (EFA) policy through the provision of free primary education.

Despite the rather gloomy picture of the policy-practice relationship painted in the foregoing studies, there is research evidence of successful efforts by teachers to reconcile traditional practices with the demands of new policy at the classroom interface. Ha's (2004) study of university classroom pedagogies in Vietnam and a comparative

study of foreign language classroom practices in the UK and Korea (Mitchell & Lee, 2003) reveal that although there are interactional differences in the practices of these teachers, these differences are far from being unrelated to CLT. Rather, teachers' interpretations and practices of communicative language teaching are influenced by and in turn influence other cultural factors that are important in each context. The Vietnamese and Korean teachers in the two studies above are clearly seen as negotiating between the demands of CLT and cultural demands that inform traditional practices. Xinmin & Adamson (2003) recount the mediating and transformation processes of a grassroots teacher (Mr Yang) in the face of new curriculum demands for holistic language development (Wang 1999) through CLT and TBLT in China. Despite not jettisoning his deep rooted beliefs in a predominantly weak form of CLT against TBLT or other strong versions of CLT, Mr Yang

...judiciously selects aspects of the innovative methodology that he feels comfortable with, and that he believes will enhance student learning. He does this by examining his practices and by turning to enterprising [younger] colleagues for support and ideas. At the same time, he tailors his pedagogical innovations to match the constraints of time and the exigencies of the examination system (p. 334)

While the major thrust of the study is to challenge the portrayal, in the literature, of English language teachers in China as mere transmitters of grammatical knowledge bound by textbooks (Maley, 1990; Zhang, 2001) it raises the important issue of how policy implementation can be largely facilitated from a bottom-up perspective, but also through making concessions by taking on board, rather than completely ignoring or rejecting existing practices, as has been the case in many contexts.

2.3. Re-defining the process of implementing (imported) policy innovations

The literature in the area of implementing innovation (Carless, 1997; Rubdy, 2008; Fullan, 1993, Segovia & Hardison, 2009, Waters & Vilches, 2008) shows that for any innovation to be well implemented, teachers need to appropriate it. Several approaches to achieving this have been proposed including continuous in-service training, but more importantly, the involvement of teachers in the development of the innovation itself. Because 'new' policy is generally meant to reflect some form of innovation, it needs to be in harmony with the local rhythms of the teachers' practices (Holliday, 1993, p.3) as well as to involve teachers not only in its implementation but at the conception phase (Jennings, 1996; Stritikus, 2003; Farrell & Kun, 2007). Four major themes have been developed in the literature on policy (or innovation) implementation. These include teacher training and development (TT&D), teacher beliefs and attitudes, practicality as well as ownership.

The literature on TT&D expounds the need to (re)train teachers with new skills and knowledge each time there is a pedagogic shift in policy. This is especially valid in cases where the new methodological trend departs significantly from previous practices and where teachers are likely to revert to the security of previous practices if they are not well equipped ideologically and/or practically to deal with the implications of the new approach (Gross, Giacuinta & Bernstein, 1971). Yet there is an extent to which this can be seen as an essentially patriarchal argument meant to reinforce the unequal power relations (Pennycook, 1989) between researchers and MoE officials on the one hand and classroom practitioners on the other. One example where this unequal power relationship has hindered innovation is the 'Madras Snowball' cascade model (see for details, Gilpin, 1997; Prabhu, 1987; Widdowson, 1968; Pennycook, 1994; Rubdy, 2008;

Smith, 1962) introduced in the Tamil Nadu region of India by the British Council in 1959 with the aim of stopping falling standards by making teachers depart from the use of the structural approach to a situational-structural syllabus with an oral presentation methodology. Amongst the reasons advanced for the failure of this reform are its irrelevance and non-sustainability in the context (Prabhu, 1987), the inappropriacy of the 'snowball' metaphor to the context (Pennycook, 1994), an over-reliance on outside expertise as well as the crowding of expertise at the top of the cascade (Gilpin, 1997). Relevant to the present study is the assertion made by Rubdy (2008, p. 14) that the reform project was 'a top-down transmission model which perceived teachers as deficient without taking into consideration the culture of the teachers.' Wallace (1999) explains that:

...most teacher development is seen, both by the deliverers...and by the participants, as an attempt to remedy some deficiency in participants' professional knowledge, practice or whatever. (p. 17)

As a result, TT&D has persistently been based on the limited assumptions, challenged more than half a century ago (see for example Henry, 1957), that it consists primarily of a set of workshops led by an expert consultant/trainer usually away from the classroom context offering as such, no authentic opportunities for teachers to learn from peers in the same way learner-centred literature recommends for the children these teachers are supposed to teach. Such experts view teaching as technical, learning as packaged and teachers as passive recipients of 'objective research' (Lieberman, 1995, p. 67) giving teachers the impression that their knowledge gained from their experiences with their learners is less valuable than the understandings of teaching and learning of experts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). Johnson (2006) explains that this perspective of teacher education is historically grounded in the positivist paradigm and structured around the

assumption that teachers could learn about the (language) content they are expected to teach, the teaching practices, then observe other ('expert') teachers, practice in the teaching practicum and develop pedagogical expertise in the learned skill over the years (p. 238). An example of a positivist practice phase of teacher education (Tenjoh-Okwen, 1996) in Cameroon is presented in table 2 below. The features of pre-service observation for training presented are in many ways similar to what happens at the level of in-service training where the inspector or head teacher assumes the role of the cooperating teacher while the teacher assumes that of the student teacher below.

Table 2: Features of observation for training in the Cameroonian setting (Tenjoh-Okwen 1996).

1. Student teachers (STs) are taught to produce elaborate, step by step, rigid lesson plans, which they usually abandon as useless and time consuming once they leave school. Typical examples include the pre-service primary school format designed by our [Cameroonian] primary school teacher training colleges and the American Peace Corps "six-point-lesson."
2. There is usually no meeting between the observer and the teacher prior to the observation. Sometimes there is a non-structured, post-observation meeting and where this exists, data collected during the lesson may touch on everything the observer could see. The feedback is often uni-directional in which the observer is the expert who tells the ST what s/he did well and what s/he did poorly. Some observers, often the teacher trainer, take delight in dishing out observation data in devastating language-negative, judgmental feedback that only discourages the neophyte.
3. The trainer-observer usually "pops in" and "pops out" of the classroom at will; s/he seldom (if ever) observes a full lesson.
4. Often the trainer-observer stands outside looking in on more than one lesson at a time by shuttling from one classroom window to another. When the observer does enter a classroom, s/he either takes the ST's lesson plan and walks out or sits in briefly before walking out.
5. The trainer-observer may interrupt ongoing lessons at will without any prior agreement with the ST concerned as to when and how s/he may intervene
6. There are generally no records/reports kept on STs during teaching practice (TP). Evaluation is based solely on one or two lessons taught under examination conditions with one or more examiners determining the "fate" of the candidate. There are few clearly defined objective criteria for grading these lessons.
7. Demonstration lessons, a vital element of training, often given by the trainer or the cooperating teacher (COOPT) are meant to be imitated by the ST resulting in what Maingay (1988) calls "ritual teaching behaviour."
8. STs are rarely given a chance to try out techniques that are unknown to the COOPT

or the trainer-observer especially when this observer is another one of the teachers in the institution.
9. There is generally no COOPT to observe lessons on a lesson-to-lesson basis as the class teacher is often away "having other fish to fry."
10. COOPT teachers instruct ST's and ensure that instructions leading to conditioned behaviour are carried out without due consideration to initiatives that the ST may want to take.
11. Generally feedback in training is judgmental, firm and directive.

Although the situation above is fairly stereotypical in the light of current trends in TT&D in Cameroon, it still captures a number of processes and attitudes to teacher training that have not significantly changed. Such processes and attitudes might fall short of preparing teachers for the expectations placed on them. Five of the eight limitations of traditional approaches to teacher development and the new ideas that now inform the field presented by Lieberman (1995) apply to the Cameroonian situation:

- 'Teacher development has been limited by lack of knowledge of how teachers learn.
- Teachers' definitions of the problems of practice have often been ignored.
- The agenda of reform involves teachers in practices that have not been a part of the accepted view of teachers' professional learning.
- Teaching has been described as a technical set of skills leaving little room for invention and the building of craft knowledge.
- Professional development opportunities have often ignored the critical importance of the context within which teachers work.' (p. 75)

Lieberman's view is particularly true of recent policy changes in Cameroon (see 1.6.2 & 1.7) where teachers are perceived as implementers of decisions taken at top level to salvage learners from hitherto deficient pedagogies and failure in the implementation of pedagogic policy is seen not as a failure of the policy itself to address contextual issues, but as a failure on the part of teachers to adapt the policy to their individual contexts, a situation which, as I have shown above, serves to maintain the unequal power relationships that exist within the educational sector. In the light of this, it seems likely that even excellent teachers placed under pressure to 'enhance' their teaching with ever

changing pedagogical ideas and consequently battered by the endless demand by ministry officials for novelty may come under severe risk of 'burn-out', of becoming 'cosmetically tired' of the job they are doing so well' (Allwright, 2003, p. 199)

Closely related to TT&D is the theme of *teacher beliefs and attitudes*, their perception of their present practice in relation to the 'new' practice. It has been argued that the correlation between beliefs and attitude on the one hand, and behaviour on the other hand, is not straightforward (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996) and research in the area of teacher beliefs and practice has been contradictory in handling this. While some studies (e.g. Farrell & Kun, 2007; Garton, 2008) suggest a strong positive correlation between teacher belief and practice, other studies (e.g. Kuchah, 2007; Lee, 2008) reveal a number of gaps between teachers' professed beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Despite these contrasting findings the underlying argument is that for any innovation to bring a shift in teachers' attitudes and their beliefs about their role in the teaching process (Young & Lee, 1987) it has to be compatible with their existing attitudes and beliefs (Brown & McIntyre, 1987).

The last two themes, that of *practicality* and *ownership* are particularly relevant to this study because they encompass the two themes discussed above. Research shows that teachers' perceptions of the *practicality* of a policy/innovation have a powerful impact on their willingness to implement it (Carless, 1997; Doyle & Ponder, 1977; Holliday, 1992; White et al., 1991). In other words, new policy has to be compatible with existing classroom practice because radical changes to teacher behaviour are most often likely to be seen by teachers as impractical irrespective of their merits (Carless, 1997). By *ownership* is meant the idea that policy has to be seen to *belong* to practitioners (Carless,

1997; Kennedy, 1998; White, 1988; Wedell, 2009a). In other words, innovations and policies that are developed on a bottom-up model and not imposed on practitioners by a powerful ‘outsider’, be it researcher or government, may be more durably applied because of the sense of appropriation the practitioners feel about it. In a sense therefore, it can be argued that for *in-service training* on new policy to be successful, the policy itself needs to be reflective of and/or integrated into teachers’ existing *beliefs* about its practicality, and this in part can be facilitated by involving teachers at the initial conception phase of the policy so that the final policy is seen as emanating from them, not from elsewhere.

The studies reviewed above raise a number of important issues that explain the disconnections, raised in the literature, between policy and practice. The very top-down nature of policy, the failure to involve implementers in the different stages of the policy development, the failure to take into account the felt needs, knowledge and beliefs of practitioners, amongst other things, make it difficult for policy to succeed (Wedell, 2009a; 2009b). Darling-Hammond (1990) asserts that teachers teach from what they know; thus if policy makers want to change teaching, they must pay attention to teacher knowledge, an assertion reinforced by Clarke (1994) who argues very strongly that ‘until the experience of teachers is central to the process of developing and applying theory, the discourse must be viewed as dysfunctional.’ Because the primary burden of enacting the tenets of policy is on the teachers (Stritikus, 2003), it is important to understand teachers’ innate and informed beliefs and practices to be able to better involve them in policy conception and implementation or at the very least, draw upon that for policy development. The present study therefore goes beyond researching the already explored area of policy–practice discourse to explore teachers’ own practices and perceptions

about appropriate practice in order to build an inventory of pedagogic practices that may inform a framework for eventual policy statements to consider in the future. Otherwise stated, my study does not seek to reinforce research in the already well explored area of policy–practice disconnections; rather it seeks to minimise such disconnections by providing a bottom-up model for policy development which takes into account the important central role of the perceptions and actual practices of teachers and the learners in the policy enactment process.

2.4. ELT Methods: How useful, how appropriate?

In section 1.6.1, I presented the recommended teaching strategies for English language in Cameroonian English-medium primary schools and went on (in 1.6.2) to show that despite the existence in *The Syllabus*, of these subject-level teaching strategies, the NPA was the overriding methodological procedure for all subjects in the primary school curriculum in Cameroon. The preponderance of the NPA discourse in Cameroon gives the impression that debates about the relevant advantages and disadvantages of different language teaching methods have not overtly preoccupied the language teaching community in Cameroon. Yet a look at research studies carried out by ELT trainee-trainers in the department of Sciences of Education at the College of Education of the University of Yaounde-I in the years preceding and following the educational reform in Cameroon (e.g., Oben, 1997; Kuchah 1996; Wirsiy, 1999, Mufor, 1999; Wikuo, 1995) reveals the insidious influence of the methods discussions on language teacher training in Cameroon. These studies mostly compared and established the relative superiority of CLT-related practices over traditional practices by administering lessons to control and experimental groups of primary school classes and arriving at conclusions on the basis of quantifiable data such as test scores as well as predefined and itemized observations

of classroom patterns that overlook the complex interplay of micro and macro forces in a natural classroom interaction. It is the interplay of these 'new' practices essentially adopted from the CLT literature developed in other contexts and the continuous influences of economically powerful foreign donor organizations (see section 1.6.2; and also CONAP, 2008; Tchombe, 2004) that have been part of the discourse of ELT in initial trainer and teacher training for primary teachers in Cameroon. The consequence has been that while the initial training of language teacher trainers has been built around trends in methodological developments elsewhere and reflected, for example, in the subject level strategies presented in 1.6.1, the dilemma of their job has been to adapt such strategies to fit into the NPA framework recommended by the MoE. The strong adherence of trainer training discourse, in Cameroon, to methods like direct method, eclectic method, Communicative language teaching, task-based method and more recently New Pedagogic Approach (NPA) and the Competency-Based approach (both understood as methods) is embedded in ideology that is derived from changing trends in ELT methodology elsewhere and an understanding of the issues raised by these methods can only be arrived at by tracing them within a global scene.

It is not the purpose of this study to recount the history and development of teaching methods, but a cursory review of the limitations of some of these may account for the current distrust of methods both by proponents of post-method theory (e.g. Kumaravadivelu 2001) and by practising teachers in Cameroon and elsewhere. ELT historians (e.g. Brown, 1980; Clarke, 1982; McArthur, 1983; Stern, 1983; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Candlin & Mercer, 2001) have described a repertoire of different methods that have been developed and propounded over the years. These methods, Stern (1983) explains, have mainly originated as responses to changing

demands on language education resulting from social, economic, political or educational circumstances (also see Wallace, 1999 for an exploration of the social dimension of methods) and also from the dissatisfactions and failures of teachers and learners with a particular method. Stern provides a number of criticisms against methods. The grammar-translation method was criticised for its overemphasis on language as a mass of rules and for its inability to emancipate the learner from the dominance of the first language. The direct method, acclaimed for its attempts to exclude L1 in L2 learning, neither resolved the issue of how to safeguard against misunderstanding without reference to L1 nor did it lend itself to ELT beyond the elementary level. Empirical research revealed a weak theoretical basis underlying the audiolingual method and practitioners complained about the lack of effectiveness and learner boredom generated by the method. The popularity of CLT has also declined partly because its assumptions of, and relevance to different contexts has been put to question (e.g., Bax 2003; Chen, 1988; Chowdhury, 2003; Ellis, 1996; Holliday 1994a; 1994b) and also because its inherently 'bigger' approach to ELT makes it vaguer and renders it harder to tell if a teacher is acting within the confines of CLT or not. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) observe that 'appropriate communicative language teaching in Hanoi [Vietnam]... might use the same pedagogic nomenclature as in London, but look very different in classroom practice' (p. 201). Hadley (1998, p.62) qualifies the communicative approach as a platform of 'unprincipled eclecticism varying from teacher to teacher.'

Several factors account for the constant criticism and distrust of existing methods and the search for 'better' methods. One of these has been the prescriptive nature in which methods have been transmitted by both theorists and decision makers to teachers. Even in the case of CLT where there are no such set down rules, decision makers and

pedagogic supervisors tend to expect teachers to subscribe to a particular ‘variety’ of CLT that is determined not by teachers themselves, but by authorities acting from outside their classrooms. No doubt therefore, methods have been variously described as instruments of linguistic imperialism by researchers in the privileged North on practitioners in the less-privileged South (Pennycook, 1989; Waters, 2007); as undermining the central role of teachers (Pennycook, 1989; Holliday, 1994a; Kumaravadivelu, 1994) and inhibiting their personal growth (Allwright 1991). Beginning teachers have the tendency to stick to the methods as they were taught in training schools. This has at times produced some very awkward situations in classrooms (Johnson 2008) resulting in what Prabhu (1990) refers to as ‘mechanical teaching’, a recurrent pattern of procedures on regularly recurrent situations. This has been the case with the NPA in Cameroon where the intimidating intrusion of pedagogic inspectors has forced some teachers to deliver lessons with monotonously recurrent procedures that have become part of a traditional rendition of an otherwise ‘new’ approach.

Proponents of a context-based approach to ELT (e.g., Bax, 2003; Holliday, 1994a; 1994b; Wei, 2004; Chowdhury, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Rubdy 2008) see methods as context-insensitive and therefore impractical and unreliable in different contexts. In the context of state education where English is part of a wider curriculum, Holliday (1994a, p. 4) explains that ELT is ‘influenced and constrained by wider educational, institutional and community forces.’ The result of the influence exerted by these factors at the micro level, that is, in a particular classroom makes it difficult to claim that any method can be so good as to be universally acclaimed. This is particularly relevant in English-medium schools in Cameroon where in addition to being the medium of

instruction in all subject areas, English is also a subject in the curriculum. The heavy dependence, of students in English-medium schools, on English to perform well in all subjects requires pedagogic practices that are different, not similar to those used to teach English in French-medium schools as the NPA suggests. Adopting the NPA therefore as an all-embracing ‘best’ method for all subjects in both English- and French-medium schools on the basis of its perceived potential to develop inferential/critical thinking skills alone could have far reaching consequences on the perceptions and practices of teachers who have to deal with the day-to-day realities of teaching in an exam-oriented context like Cameroon. There is indeed extensive literature on ELT and context, most of which suggests that proponents of particular language teaching methods have not fully taken into consideration the potential of teaching and learning contexts to influence practice. Although the case can be made that resistance to methodological innovation on the basis of cultural/contextual differences can sometimes be based on misconceptions or partial/biased understanding of the methodology itself (see Aoki & Smith, 1999 for a response to ‘cultural’ objections to Learner Autonomy in Asia; and Kuchah & Smith, 2011 for a response to the same in African contexts) it remains true that the ecology of any context plays an important role in shaping pedagogic practice (van Lier, 2004).

2.5. Post-methodology and the continuing search for appropriate ELT methods.

Emerging from the accusations and shortcomings of methods and their proponents discussed above has been the call to depart from the enslavement and over-generalisations of methods and to adopt alternative approaches to language pedagogy. In this light, post-methodology has been advocated by ELT scholars (e.g., Johnson 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; 2001; 2006; Pennycook 1989) as a way not only of deconstructing the ideological and social ethos of methods, but also of empowering

language teachers. Kumaravadivelu (1994) defines the Post Method Condition, as ‘a state of affairs that compels us to refigure the relationship between the theorizers and the practitioners of method’ (p. 28). The emergent relationship consists of a reversal of roles wherein practitioners become ‘strategic teachers and strategic researchers’ working within a framework of macro strategies and developing micro strategies which are not based on any particular theories or methods, but on emerging realities in their working context as well as the creativity and autonomous decisions that teachers and learners bring to each context. Taking this further and drawing from Widdowson’s (1980) distinction between *linguistics applied* and *applied linguistics*, Johnson (1995) postulates a paradigm shift from *methodology applied* to *applied methodology*. By *methodology applied*, Johnson (ibid) refers to a situation where a ready-made method is presented to teachers who are then left with the responsibility of applying it to their situation. *Applied Methodology*, on the other hand, involves starting off with the problems faced in a given situation, and deriving a methodology to meet them. The shift to applied methodology suggests giving importance to the generative influence of contextual exigencies in developing methodology, which methodology, Wallace (1999) argues, should respond to changes in the society, the immediate environment, the learners and the teachers. Kumaravadivelu (2001) conceptualises this by proposing three pedagogic parameters for re-orienting ELT methodology, namely, *particularity*, *practicality* and *possibility*. The *pedagogy of practicality* seeks to equate the importance of practitioners’ and academics’ theories by empowering teachers to ‘theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 59), the *pedagogy of particularity* aims at making practitioners aware of the varied linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds and needs of their learners, the *pedagogy of possibility* links language teaching and social transformation by drawing from ‘the socio-political

consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 59).

While post-method ideology seems to celebrate the power of teachers by relying on their competence and confidence (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) it clearly ignores the reality of language teaching and the language teacher (Akbari 2008). The question of how to prepare teachers for their duties within its paradigms remains largely unanswered especially when one considers the disparities that exist between different contexts in terms of teacher qualifications and proficiency. In relying on teachers' competence and qualifications, the post-method ideology seems to take for granted the differences in teachers' abilities as well as the administrative constraints imposed on teachers of state institutions. What is more, in its focus on a kind of unitary background and needs of learners, post-method seems to ignore the reality of African classrooms where hundreds of learners from many L1 and cultural and even religious backgrounds coexist in the same classroom nor does it recognise the challenging classroom exigencies of younger learners in mainstream primary schools. In this light, the post-method ideology can be said to be a further manifestation of a search for method through

...an attempt to unify ... disparate elements into a more holistic, redefined communicative language teaching (CLT) through a dialectical process of building and deconstructing forces (Bell, 2003, p. 326).

Above, I have shown the shortcomings both of the discourse of method and of post-method pedagogies in terms of their relative inability to handle contextual variations of learning and learners on the one hand, and teaching and teachers on the other hand. While post-methodology has not yet found its way into ELT discourse in Cameroon, the pervasive presence of methods imported from donor countries and prescribed by the

MOE to teachers cannot be overlooked especially in a context where methods are seen as applicable to all subjects in the curriculum. As I have previously discussed, these methods have been prescribed to teachers as therapies for their methodological deficiencies and a magic wand to the problem of falling standards in English especially at primary level. Such a perspective, as has been discussed above (Rubdy, 2008) can only result in frustration and resistance on the part of teachers. The present study, while acknowledging the importance of contextual variables in developing pedagogy, does not seek to propose a local method, nor does it seek to reinforce the arguments that challenge the contextual appropriateness of western methods. In other words, my purpose is not to present the educational, economic, social and cultural context of the Cameroonian classroom as a constraint to the application of any method. While it cannot be denied that some circumstances present constraints to successful learning in general, to see context essentially as a constraint to the application or applicability of a method is to authenticate the false claims of the hegemony of methods to the detriment of an appreciation of the generative influence of context to teaching and learning. My purpose therefore is to replace the deficit paradigm of recent pedagogic policy enactment and dissemination in Cameroon by analysing teachers' practices within the framework of an 'enhancement paradigm' which, according to Wallace (1999) is 'based on a well-grounded evaluation of the positive features of [teachers'] professional social context at all levels: macro, micro and individual' (p. 17). In the present study, the enhancement paradigm draws on an in-depth study of the positive features of teachers' practices as these practices are influenced by, and as they respond to, the realities of their classrooms and their sense of engagement. While, I agree that understanding the positive features of the social context is important in teacher development, it is my contention that evaluating the positive features of teachers' pragmatic responses to the social context

could be a more practical, relevant and teacher-friendly alternative to promoting professional development especially given the fast changing socio-cultural and technological realities of countries in transition like Cameroon.

2.6. ELT methodology: Best or Appropriate Practice?

So far, I have discussed research that focuses on the disconnection between policy and practice on the one hand and the shortcomings of the method and post-method discourse in handling variations in teaching and teachers as well as in learning and learners on the other. In both cases, I have explained, drawing from existing literature in the area, some of the reasons for these gaps. The implications of this literature seem to give the unhealthy impression that researchers and educational authorities do not generally work with the interests of practitioners in mind or rather that they are out of touch with practitioner reality. While this can be sustained in different degrees and contexts, it cannot be denied that all educational research, and consequent policy, aims at arriving at the best possible solution to specific educational contexts. As McKeon (1998) explains:

The move to professionalize teaching has research at its heart – both in terms of providing teachers with a more thorough working knowledge of research methods as a way of observing and studying their own classes and in terms of giving them an appreciation and understanding of what research has shown about teaching, learning, and human development. In fact, much of the recent work in the development of content and professional teaching standards across the disciplines reflects this move towards a best practice ideal of teaching and the connection of research and practice (p. 494)

It is this connection between research and practice emanating largely from teachers' own conscious understanding of their classrooms that is the basis for the move towards best practice models. Best practice therefore comes across as having a potential for developing the profession of teaching because it departs from the essentially 'laboratory'-based approach inherent in the development of language acquisition

theories that underlie methods but also because it arises from teachers' own informed responses to their working context (Zemelam & Hyde, 1998). In a sense therefore, best practice provides an argument against the top-down perspective, discussed above, of both policy and method and provides a bottom-up perspective based on theorised practice. The question though is whether the striving for best practice in education has the potential to either enhance or impede the development of the profession and its professionals. To explore this further, it is necessary to examine literature on best practice so as to see the possible directional dynamics this can exert on the work of practitioners.

The terms 'best practice' and 'good practice' - everyday phrases in the professions of medicine and social care (see for example Grol & Grimshaw, 2003) and also in the field of law (see Zemelam & Hyde, 1998) – describe solid, reputable, state-of-the-art work in a field but as McKeon (1998) explains, the concept of best practice has its roots in the field of agriculture in the early 90s in America when professors of agriculture aided by agents, graduates in agriculture, flooded local state communities with agricultural innovations under the Farm Bureau. The success of this system, McKeon argues, lay in a number of factors including the dominant role of agriculture as local industry, the enthusiasm and commitment of the farmers who contributed to the salaries of the agents, the subsequent use of subject-area specialist agents who assumed the task of interpreting research findings in their fields, and the collective role of all participants in the research/transfer process in the production of utilizable knowledge as well as its diffusion for adoption by farmers. Rogers (1995) reports that the agricultural extension service described above was the world's most successful change agency, a position

supported by McKeon (1998) who dismisses the argument against the top-down nature of this innovation diffusion process on the basis of its success.

Yet the argument for its adoption into educational innovation diffusion remains problematic. Farmers deal with crops, teachers with humans, thus the interface between farmers and the ‘recipients’ of their activity on the one hand and that between teachers and the ‘recipients’ of their activity on the other cannot be explained in the same way. Thinking beings cannot be expected to respond to prescribed stimuli in the same way as plants will and it is this fundamental difference between the object of the farmer’s job and that of the teacher’s job that makes the difference between how both groups of professionals perceive innovation. Even the perceived success of the defunct National Diffusion Network (NDN) of the U.S. Department of Education (see McKeon, 1998; and Sashkin & Ergermeier, 1993) which followed the agricultural diffusion model relying on state facilitators to disseminate information and technical assistance to locally developed curricula and programmes only worked for teachers “who wanted to adopt a particular proven program” (McKeon 1998, p. 496). Besides, the fact that these teachers adopted curricula from the NDN does not imply it was successful in their classes, nor are we provided with this information. What is more, adoption by teachers cannot necessarily be attributed to its being best practice since it can be argued that any curriculum document that provided guidelines to teachers who, hitherto, had worked in a system that had no clear curriculum guidelines as is the case with these teachers, would have been accepted by teachers who badly needed a focus.

The arguments above point to the very problematic nature of the concept of best practice itself. Smith & Sutton (1999) situate the concept within the quality discourse and

modernist ideas that have dominated the healthcare system. This dominant discourse, they argue, delegitimizes and

“...discourages alternative ways of thinking and acting and reacts to these alternatives as though they are irrational, non-scientific and therefore irrelevant to today’s world. Consequently, the dominant discourse becomes embedded into our everyday thinking and acting and becomes a taken for granted reality that shapes the way we come to see the world. Contemporary thoughts and ideas seek to reinforce this dominant discourse, thus perpetuating its existence and maintaining its dominance and power (p. 101)

Through a process of benchmarking, professionals’ performances and practices are measured against leaders’ thus ignoring, as it were, the multiplicity of ideas and practices as well as the variations in society, in pursuit of a global, and all embracing ‘best’ practice. But as Edge and Richards (1998) have argued “characterising individual accounts of practice as best undermines the status of particular understanding by holding out the prospect of general application” (p. 570). Besides, success in one organization does not entail success in another (Smith & Sutton 1999, p.102) in the same way as success in one classroom does not entail success in another classroom, and we may add that in a profession as complex as teaching, success in one lesson does not mean success in another lesson delivered even by the same teacher. In the area of ELT, Edge and Richards (1998) see the importation of the concept of best practice as representing a dangerous distortion of its professional significance and conclude that “in a world where teacher educators struggle every day with the complexities and conundrums of the educative process, the talismanic power of sanctified product represents a threat to our developmental well-being” (p. 570). The point to make here however, is that the danger of importing this concept into the field of ELT lies less at the level of principles than in the routine enactment of these principles. Acting according to principles cannot be seen as defective in itself unless there is evidence that a teacher’s actions do not emanate

from his/her sense of plausibility (Prabhu, 1990). So, a teacher who acts out (which could be in many different ways) the principles that [1] pupils need timely feedback if they are not to lose their way (given in one of a number of ways) [2] that pupils need adequate exposure to data before being challenged and [3] that pupils need time to come to grips with things (wait time after questions, reflection time, repetition of the same element over a series of lessons) could be led to realise these principles in a number of different ways according to need and circumstances, but they would all count as good practice because they are led by a sense of 'plausibility'.

But the experience is that, in a context like Cameroon, the slavish adherence, on the part of pedagogic authorities with little experience of current classroom reality, to innovations 'donated' into the educational system by funding bodies has led to the assessment of teachers, by pedagogic inspectors, with checklists on processes they do not understand (cf. Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 571). As such, many teachers are compelled to adopt, even without conviction, an approved routine of practices which, while satisfying the demands of the educational authorities and policy makers, does not address the needs of their particular classrooms. In this sense therefore, applying best practice in ELT invokes a sense of having attained an end point, a pinnacle of performance beyond which nothing else is achievable and as such delegitimizes the continuation of research and the demand for research by scholars and practitioners in our field. It sustains the false hegemony of particular pedagogic practices thus undermining the ecological and cultural realities of the vast and diverse ELT world. Establishing a set of practices as 'best' limits practitioners' possibilities and therefore discourages flexibility and creativity which are essential factors for a developmental, context-sensitive and ecologically-oriented approach to teaching. What is more, the best practice

discourse reinforces the power differential (Pennycook, 1989) that is at the root of teacher resistance to innovation and as such perpetuates the disconnections we have discussed above, between policy and practice. Smith and Sutton (1999) suggest that

Language that incorporates the use of the term 'better practice' is more indicative of reality as it indicates a practice that is progressive and dynamic. It indicates that practice is continually evolving and improving rather than having reached a pinnacle of performance (p. 103).

While it is true that practice, including pedagogic practice, has to be placed within a continuum, qualifying a particular practice as 'better' implies a comparison of two practices and begs the very questions that 'best' practice has not answered, namely, from whose perspective and for what purpose is one practice better than another? How is power exercised and experienced and whose interests are being served in adopting better practice (Smith & Sutton 1999, p. 103)? Besides, it can also be argued that like best practice, promoting 'better practice' gives teachers the impression of a teaching practice, external to their experiences 'rather than being the individually determined best-next-step for each teacher' (Edge & Richards 1998, p. 571).

2.7. Teaching English in difficult circumstances: can there be a 'best practice'?

The literature on teaching approaches and methods has over the years been dominated by theories and principles developed in favourable teaching circumstances with relatively little attention being given to under-privileged contexts. Holliday (1994a; 1994b) draws attention to the disconnections between methodological constructs developed in BANA (British, Australasian and North American) contexts and their misapplication in TESEP (Tertiary, Secondary and Primary) state education contexts. He argues that BANA contexts are generally well resourced environments constituted of small groups of students in small classes, undertaking intensive English as a foreign

language courses taught by highly trained native speaker teachers, with relative freedom to experiment on content and methodology. TESEP contexts on the other hand are by their very institutional nature, constrained by the strong influences of the syllabus, the textbook and the examination. Classes are usually large, under-resourced with a limited time for language in the overall curriculum; teachers are relatively untrained and less proficient in English. Transferring methodologies from BANA contexts to TESEP contexts without considering the macro and micro sociocultural forces impacting on classroom pedagogy in the latter can be a complex situation to handle.

While Holliday's BANA/TESEP distinction raises an important argument against direct transfer of methodologies from otherwise 'elitist' contexts to 'disadvantaged' contexts, it must be said that current trends in mainstream ELT around the world make the distinction problematic. English language has fast become the language of the world and many countries, eager to train citizens that are competitive in the global platform are including English language in school curriculums (Graddol, 2006). The consequence is that research in ELT is also now being carried out in mainstream (TESEP-type) educational systems around the world and as such, ELT pedagogy is developing alongside other subject pedagogies. More significant is the fact that even within these mainstream educational circles, there are large contextual variations in terms of class sizes, L1 backgrounds of learners and the availability and nature of resources (see 1.4 and 1.5 for the realities of the Cameroonian context), a situation which has so far not been fully addressed by research predominantly developed in more privileged mainstream contexts. In spite of the paucity of research from less privileged (South) countries a number of research projects stand out as having attempted to address some of these variations.

In his presentation at the 2010 IATEFL conference at Harrogate, Richard Smith (see Smith 2011) used the abbreviation TiDC to refer to Teaching in Difficult Circumstances, echoing, as it were, classrooms that had been examined five decades before in the area of English language teaching by West (1960) who described them as consisting of ‘over 30 pupils (more usually 40 or even 50), congested on benches [...], ill-graded, with a teacher who perhaps does not speak English well [...], working in a hot climate’ (p.1). Maley (2001) describes a classroom of 60 secondary school students who have had to walk a distance of at least 5 miles after doing their morning chores, crammed in a dirty classroom meant for 30; a poorly paid teacher with a rudimentary competence in English language, using a textbook that represents characters from an unfamiliar luxurious culture in a classroom with a pitted and grey blackboard and no chalk at times, and temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius. While this description may seem a caricature, the situation does exist with variations in many parts of the developing world. My own experience (See Kuchah & Smith, 2011) of teaching a secondary class of more than 200 teenagers with no textbooks in a crowded classroom with temperatures above 40 degrees in the north of Cameroon chimes with arguments by Smith (2011) and Maley (2001) that a huge amount of ELT in the world today takes place in situations that are ‘far from the ideal world of pedagogical excitement and innovatory teaching’ (Maley 2001, p.1) that western ELT researchers and practitioners would like to think they inhabit. These teaching contexts which include large classes with limited resources have, paradoxically, remained under-considered in ‘mainstream’ ELT discourse. What is more, more than 50 years after Michael West raised the issue of teaching English in difficult circumstances and despite research into large classes carried out within the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project coordinated by Dick Allwright and Hywel

Coleman in the 1980s, UK based ELT research which constitutes one of the major import in many developing countries where ELT is ‘consumed’ still continues to focus on relatively well resourced settings (cf Rixon & Smith, 2010). A number of factors may account for this, amongst which, one may cite the heterogeneous nature of large classes around the world which accounts for the difficulty in defining classroom sizes in terms of numbers as well as the absence of a mutually acceptable methodological framework for, as well as the practical challenges of researching difficult circumstances.

Central to TiDC-related literature is the problem of large classes yet there can hardly be a quantitative definition of what constitutes a large class because perceptions vary from one context to the other. Yet, surprisingly, existing literature seems to agree that large classes range from 40 students (see for example Dixon, 1986; Nolasco & Arthur, 1990) to 60 students (e.g. George, 1991; Long, 1977; Touba, 1999). Larger variations in classroom size only begin to emerge when we look to literature from sub-Saharan Africa and the Subcontinent which includes classes of 50 to 150 students (Emery 2013; Shamim et.al., 2007) and 235 students (Kuchah & Smith, 2011). Yet even in these contexts there seems to be a consensus that the minimum point for considering a class as numerically large is between 40 and 50, a situation which places classroom enrolment within a continuum. In Cameroon, for example, the official recommendation is 40 students per class making any enrolment above this large. Unfortunately, this is hardly the case in the vast majority of state schools as demographic pressure resulting from the institution of free and compulsory education at primary level makes it difficult for state schools to limit the number of children they admit. Besides, the social demand for education, as the only means to a decent life available to children in this context, outstrips state resources leading to a very high pupil – teacher ratio (cf O’Sullivan,

2006). Thus teachers tend to define large classes, not just in terms of numbers, but mostly in terms of other variables. Teachers rely on the largest class they regularly teach (Coleman, 1989a) so that a teacher who is used to teaching 60 students may see a class of 80 students as large, while one who is used to teaching more than a hundred students, would see a class of 80 students as small. Other variables include teacher stress and workload due to large numbers, teachers' concern about giving equal opportunity to all learners, issues of classroom and group work management, movement around the classroom and concerns about assessment and giving feedback to learners (also see Emery 2013, Shamim et. al., 2007). Learners' perceptions of large classes are shaped by factors that go beyond numbers. Shamim (1993) identifies factors such as lack of adequate space leading to overcrowded classrooms; inadequate attention from the teacher; lack of opportunities to participate in classroom activities; higher levels of disruptive noise in the classroom; and difficulty in getting their written work checked or receiving oral feedback from their teachers.

The problems and challenges posed to teaching and learning in difficult circumstances (including large classes) have been extensively discussed in the literature (see for example Baker & Westrup 2000; Cakmak, 2009; Coleman 1989b; Emery 2013; Englehart, 2006; Hayes, 1997; Jimakorn & Singhasiri, 2006; Milesi & Gamoran, 2006; Peachey, 1989; Shamim, 1996; Shamim et al, 2007; Watson Todd, 1999; 2006; Woodward, 2001) but much of the focus has been on matters of discipline, assessment and classroom interactional procedure rather than on actual learning. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, very few studies (e.g. Coleman 1989b and Ur, 1996) have claimed that large classes lead to less effective learning. However, such claims lack sound empirical evidence. Oladejo (1992) has critiqued such research (particularly the

Lancaster-Leeds project) on the grounds that it not only fails to investigate how large classes actually affect the teacher, but also ignores learners' perspectives. Besides, the questionnaire design for the Lancaster-Leeds project presented large classes as a priori, difficult (Peachey, 1989) thus conditioning the opinions of respondents. Moreover, these respondents were not directly involved in large class teaching in their countries and could not be truly representative of their contexts. What is more, due to the fact that respondents had just completed a short course in the UK, it could be argued that their opinions were largely affected by the UK experience. In terms of research design, it is difficult from the questionnaires to clarify which problems of large classes were actually the result of the size of the class and not the outcome of other variables such poor teacher training, lack of adequate teaching materials, or even the adoption of unproductive teaching methods (Oladejo, 1992, p. 52). In line with this, Kumar (1992) and Shamim (1993) have argued that a major shortcoming of earlier class size research was that they ignored the mediating variables – learner, teacher, classroom process etc – that impact on, and are impacted upon, by the class size variable.

Whatever the limitations of these studies the sheer number and variety of problems they list are daunting even to the best teachers and as such impose on ELT practitioners and researchers the need to go beyond so far unproductive debates such as what constitutes large or small classes, what causes them, and how they affect teaching/learning to a more proactive research into ways of handling a situation which, given the economic situation of most developing countries today, cannot be overlooked in the foreseeable future. What is more, as research by Michaelowa (2001) in five Francophone sub-Saharan countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Senegal - shows, an increase in class size above 62 only modestly affected learning. Furthermore,

Hanushek *et al.* (1995) conclude that:

The evidence [in the developing world] provides no support for policies to reduce class size. Of ... 30 studies investigating teacher-pupil ratios, only eight find statistically significant results supporting smaller classes; an equal number are significant but have the opposite sign; and almost half are statistically insignificant. These findings qualitatively duplicate those in the US studies. Class size in developing country studies are considerably more varied than those in ... US studies and thus pertain to a wider set of environments, providing even stronger evidence that the enthusiasm for policies to reduce class size is misplaced. (in O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 27)

The evidence summarised above suggest that it might be more relevant to investigate how good teachers deal with the realities of their different contexts, rather than continue to develop a repertoire of problems caused by large classes and other difficult circumstances. As Buckingham affirms:

...class size has less effect when teachers are competent; and the single most important influence on student achievement is teacher quality. Research shows unequivocally that it is far more valuable, both in education and fiscal terms, to have good teachers than lots of teachers (2003, p.71).

Given the ever rising number of children in schools in developing countries, there is need at the moment, to face large classes as a reality that should be addressed, not avoided. In this light some large class-related literature suggests solutions to problems of classroom management (Woodward, 2001; Haozhang, 1997; Felder, 1997) interpersonal variables (Haozhang, 1997; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Duppenhaler, 1991), as well as assessment and feedback (Duppenhaler, 1991; Watson Todd, 1999; Hargan, 1994) and also classroom interaction (Touba, 1999; Woodward, 2001; Dion, 1996). The different solutions in the literature raise a number of issues that need addressing. The first of these has to do with the apparent lack of a research base for the solutions which, although useful for teachers are often presented as teaching tips rather than 'scientifically' proven techniques (cf Watson Todd, 2006). A second issue is that even where there is evidence

from research, the general tendency is to adopt a problem-solution approach to increase effective teaching/learning (see for example Nolasco & Arthur, 1990; Shamim et al., 2007). This kind of approach works on the false assumption that a classroom event can be segmented into separate independent factors which when addressed separately can bring change to the whole; an assumption which ignores the complex nature of the micro and macro forces that influence teachers and learners at the lesson interface (see Holliday, 1994a). A third issue arises from the paucity of solutions specific to affective and interactional problems. As presented above, a lot of the literature tends to focus on solving problems of management, learning activities and evaluation, ignoring as it were, variables related to affective and interactional issues which seem to be at the centre of the pedagogic process especially with young learners (see Kuchah & Pinter 2012).

In recent years there have been criticisms of the absence of both teachers' and learners' voices in large class/difficult circumstances research as well as recommendations for more classroom-based observation research (see Ajjan 2012; Oladejo, 1992; Rubdy 2008; Smith, 2011) which examines the teachers' role in achieving successful learning outcomes in otherwise under-privileged contexts. Very few studies (e.g., Nakabugo 2008; O'Sullivan 2006) have attempted to investigate good practice in sub-Saharan African contexts through observation and interviews with teachers. O'Sullivan (2006) observed and videoed a series of lessons in Uganda and after analysis, concluded that some of these lessons were more effective than others - in terms of feasibility and relativity - in bringing about learning. The evidence of learning in this study emerges from children's answers to questions during lessons; their ability to complete written activities; their engagement in group tasks; their ability to read new words introduced; and their offering of examples. She concludes that the effectiveness of the four lessons

(two of which are English language lessons) is a result of four basic techniques exploited by the teachers, namely: classroom organisation and management; effective use of generic basic teaching skills such as effective questioning, use of group work etc; the use of a variety of approaches including the use of resources in the environment (also see Garton, Copland and Burns 2011 for observation analysis of a Tanzanian teacher's effective use of realia); as well as whole class teaching and the frequency with which the teacher solicits students' opinions and reactions to others' opinions. The underlying factor in all of these, she argues, is the energy, animation and enthusiasm of the teachers which contributed to the positive hardworking atmosphere in the classes. In Nakabugo's (2008) study, data from interviews and classroom observations of one hundred lessons by 35 early primary school teachers was analysed to establish congruence and/or contradiction between what teachers said and their actual teaching. The findings reveal that, the challenges of teaching large classes notwithstanding, different teachers in the different contexts (rural and urban) had developed strategies to cope with large classes and "promote" learning. Some of these strategies – like the use of group work - are akin to the literature already discussed and the employment of the teacher's enthusiasm and strategies for attracting children's attention through storytelling, singing and questions and answers re-echo O'Sullivan's (2006) argument that the effective use of generic teaching skills can be a very good way of enhancing learning.

The two African studies reviewed above, albeit providing useful insights for understanding good practice in teaching and learning in TiDC contexts, point to a need for more classroom based research in difficult circumstances. Given the realities of the context of the present study, and the need for a positive focus on developing appropriate methodology/good practice in large classes (Smith 2011), observing and interviewing

'good' teachers is central (though not unique) to the present study. The African studies reveal some methodological limitations that need to be considered in further investigations into classroom processes. The first is the absence, in both studies of learners' perspectives. The pendulum swing from teacher-centredness to learner-centredness (Johnson 2006) makes them important stakeholders in the teaching/learning process and as such, imposes the need to seek their perspectives about good teachers/teaching (Pinter, Kuchah & Smith 2013). I shall take this point up later in section 2.8.1 of this chapter below. The second limitation is that in both studies, it is the researcher's perspective of effective teaching that is highlighted with no opportunity for the teachers and/or their colleagues to give their post-teaching judgement of the lessons. This rather patronising perspective of the research may ignore other aspects of the lessons which may be seen as ineffective by the researchers (in both cases, outsiders) but effective by the teachers themselves. In the light of the above, the present study will take into consideration the perspectives of both teachers and learners and, through group interviews with children, lesson observations, post-lesson stimulated recall with each observed teacher and group discussions about videoed lessons with other teachers within the same context, attempt to gain insights into what teachers and learners perceive as contextually appropriate pedagogic practices. Through this, I intend to highlight the voices of practitioners and their learners in an area of research that has hitherto been dominated by the perspectives and judgements of non-practitioners. In other words, I will attempt to respond to the recent demands (see Shamim, 2010 and Smith, 2011) for bottom-up research into good practice in TiDC contexts.

2.8. TT&D and policy/innovation: Learning from the bottom-up

In this section, I examine the model of innovation transmission via teacher training/development in the light of the existing literature on teacher training and development, innovation diffusion and change management. Having examined literature on theory-practice disconnections and the reasons for these above, it is important at this point to indicate that such disconnections tend to veil the enormous potential (demonstrated in the literature too) for theory and practice to be mutually constructed and enriched. My purpose is therefore to explore the conditions for establishing such a mutually inclusive relationship between theory and practice by drawing from the literature on TT&D, issues and developments that inform the essentially bottom-up procedure adapted for this study. I draw from discussions of learner-centredness and learners' agency as well as developments in the area of language teacher cognition to show how ELT pedagogy can benefit from exploring the potential of learners and teachers to generate ideas and practices.

2.8.1. Learner-centredness: Learning from learners.

In section 2.2 above, literature on policy-practice disconnections was reviewed to show how recent developments in the spread of English are influencing teaching policy in many countries in the world. Research in Japan, Singapore, Turkey, Vietnam, Hongkong, Thailand, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda and Kenya for example revealed that although the predominant discourse in language pedagogy policy was learner-centredness (LC), actual teaching practices remained at odds with MoE rhetoric. This section examines pedagogical ideas and recommendations for teaching English to young learners (TEYL) to show how these ideas fail to fully take into consideration the voices of the very learners for whom they are designed. In doing this, I intend to draw from

developments in sociology to show why we may benefit from learning from (especially) young learners about learning, so as to inform existing predominantly adult-oriented ideas of how children learn. This is particularly important in a study about Cameroon, given that the country's ratification of the UN declaration of the rights of the child on 11 January 1993 and its subsequent promotion of learner-centred methodologies in 1998 is at the heart of the issues this study seeks to investigate.

LC takes its roots from philosophical and psychological ideas about childhood and child-centredness. As far back as the 18th century Rousseau (1762) made a case for children's innate tendency to explore the world and find things out in their own way, arguing that education ought to allow them opportunities to discover and draw conclusions from their own experiences rather than force them to learn beyond their grasp. This call for child-centred education was further developed by Dewey (1956) who criticised traditional education of gravitating outside the child's experiences:

In traditional education, 'the centre of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself... Now the change which is coming into our education is the shifting of the centre of gravity. It is a change, a revolution not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical centre shifted from the earth to the sun. In this case, the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the centre about which they are organised (p.34)

Bell (1981) and Bennet (1976) suggest that the fullest expression of child-centred practices were translated into 'progressive approaches' to education and promoted in England during the 1960s and 70s. Progressive approaches emphasise interest and play, learning by discovery, pupil active roles, creative expressions, integrated subject matter, intrinsic motivation, pupils' participation in decision making in the process of learning, cooperative learning, learner equality and mutual respect, while rejecting rigid forms of

control and testing. Under these circumstances, the teacher's role is that of guide to learners' educational experiences.

There is also substantial evidence from the field of psychology and SLA that children and adults approach learning in significantly different ways. Insights from constructivism (e.g. Piaget 1928; Donaldson 1978) and social constructivism (Vygotsky 1978; Cameron, 2001) inform us that young learners develop their knowledge of the world around them through action and interacting with the environment and people in unique ways that need to be taken into consideration in developing teaching strategies for them. This is further supported by SLA research (Clahsen 1988; Haznedar 2001; Haznedar & Schwartz 1997; Ionin & Wexler 2002; Krashen, Long & Scarcella 1979; Krashen, Scarcella, & Long 1982) which shows significant challenges faced by young learners in the development of morphological and syntactic structures in English necessitating specific teaching strategies and input. Drawing from LC-related theory, a common feature of the TEYL literature is therefore the predominant use of 'activities' rather than methods, suggesting that TEYL experts seem to agree that young learners learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process. In a recent survey of 4,696 EYL teachers from 144 countries Garton, Copland & Burns (2011) reveal that their major pedagogies primarily include activities like children repeating after the teacher, listening to audio recordings, reading aloud, playing games, singing, filling gaps and role-play amongst others. Addressing the relevance of Nunan's (1995) discussion of the mismatches between teaching and learning agenda, Bourke (2006) claims that from an experiential perspective, the world of children is that of fantasy and make-believe, of dragons, monsters, talking animals, and alien beings and as such language teaching content has to include such activities as games and fun, doing and making, songs,

chants, rhymes, big books which will facilitate language acquisition in the classroom (pp. 280-1). Despite the cultural limitations of parts of this claim (e.g., some cultures in Cameroon object to the idea of talking animals) the repertoire of TEYL activities suggested by young learner gurus and researchers includes ‘creative’ activities like drama and roleplay, games, stories, songs, and ‘doing’ activities amongst others (see section 1.7) which seem to endorse Bourke’s ideas.

Permeating the literature cited above has been the importance of visual aids and any other forms of language teaching support materials and situations. More than 50 years ago, Corder (1963) argued for the use of visual aids - i.e., anything which can be seen while the language is being spoken (p.85) - in the language classrooms claiming that in many cases, it was better to talk with the real thing than a picture of it. The use of visual aids and realia has received extensive attention in TEYL (see for example Gonzalez 2010; Nino 2010; Pinter 2006). Focus on the use of visual aids has also featured in local research in Cameroon with researchers (e.g. Che 1998; Folindjo 1999; Ticha 1999; Wirsiy 1999) demonstrating through quasi-experimentation that young learners achieve more in language learning when this is facilitated by visuals and realia.

The various sources cited in this section tend to share one thing in common, namely that they focus on ideas and research procedures that either involve adults manipulating variables with children being only passive ‘objects’ of research or they focus on perspectives expressed by adults albeit with experience of teaching or working with young learners. Their contribution to the understanding and development of the TEYL profession notwithstanding, there still seems to be a need for research that takes on board the perspectives of young learners about their own learning and the teaching that

address their needs and aspirations. While in the field of anthropology and sociology (e.g. Christensen & James 2008), particularly within the ‘New Sociology of Childhood’ movement (Christensen & Prout, 2002; James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Maybin, 2006), there has been a well-established emphasis on the importance of seeking children’s perspectives about important aspects of their lives, this tradition is still not well established in second/foreign language teaching despite the promotion of learner-centred approaches. Scott (2008) argues that ‘the best people to provide information on the child’s perspective, actions and attitudes are the children themselves. Children provide reliable responses if questioned about events that are meaningful to their lives’ (p.88).

Pinter (2011) advises that:

‘...we can learn an enormous amount from children when we listen to their voices and perspectives about second language learning processes and practices. Children might have a different emphasis or a different view compared to adults, such as their teachers or their parents, but ... their point of view is worth taking into account even if it seems puzzling or unusual at first sight.’ (p. 203)

Recent TEYL related participatory research, by Pinter & Zandian (2012) and Kuchah & Pinter (2012) for example, suggests that when children are put under conducive circumstances they are capable of generating insights which deconstruct and reconstruct the fallacy of adult prerogatives over them. This study therefore takes on board recommendations for including learners in the continuing search for teaching practices that address their needs and interests (see research question 1).

2.8.2. Teacher cognition and teachers’ agency in ELT pedagogy research.

Teacher Cognition (Borg 2003; 2006; Ellis 2006; Manning & Payne 1993) represents a branch of educational research which has shed light on our understanding of how macro,

micro and personal factors inform the way teachers perform their job. Borg (2003) defines teacher cognition as ‘what teachers think, know, and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom’ (p. 81). Johnson (2006) points out that over the last four decades there has been a dramatic shift in the way educational research has conceptualised Teacher Cognition and consequently informed teacher education. Research into teachers’ mental lives and cognitions (e.g. Breen et al. 2001; Borg 1999; 2003; 2006; 2009; 2011; Crandall, 2000; Ellis 2006; Freeman, 2002; Manning & Payne 1993; Sanchez, 2010; Walberg, 1977; Woods 1996) reveals that teachers’ prior experiences, their understandings of their practices and more importantly, their contexts of work have a very important influence on how and why they act in particular ways. It is now clear that studying language and meta-language as well as language acquisition theory does not ipso facto translate into appropriate teaching practices. Rather, emphasis is now being given to teachers’ praxis (Edge & Richards, 1998) a transformative process by which through permeating the theory they learn with their own experiences, teachers become both consumers and producers of theory in ways that are appropriate for their contexts (Johnson, 2003). Theory directs their practice which in turn corrects theory making it possible for teachers to act in ways that produce modified versions of ‘old’ theory, or new theory altogether. The impact of such research is what has been referred to as the *sociocultural turn* (Johnson, 2006) namely an epistemological departure from the positivistic paradigm informing the transmission of new methodologies to teachers to the construction of individual knowledge through knowledge of the communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) but, and more importantly, the immediate social context within which the individual teacher participates. In other words, social construction of good practices as opposed to handing down recommended practices is now being encouraged in some

tertiary learning contexts resulting in the mapping of research concepts like reflective teaching (Lockhart & Richards, 1994) action research (Edge, 2001; Wallace, 1998) teacher research (Burns, 1999; Edge & Richards, 1993) and exploratory practice (Allwright, 2003; 2005; Allwright and Hanks, 2009) which all legitimize teachers' knowledge and highlight the importance of reflective inquiry into the experiences of teachers as mechanisms for change in classroom practice (Johnson, 2006). In the light of this epistemological shift, the perspective adapted in this study involves teachers exploring their experiential knowledge within a background of their understanding of theory. In the case of many of these teachers, the theory dominating their professional lives may be related to the NPA yet giving them an opportunity to reflect on their own pragmatic responses to the daily conundrums of their classrooms may generate both personal and shared perspectives and practices that may point to new dimensions of theoretical and practice-oriented development.

2.9. Summary and Point of Departure

So far, I have made the point that top-down educational policies, as well as the discourses of methods, postmethod and best practice have not yet unequivocally addressed the conundrums of classroom situations all over the world. This is even more so in contexts like Cameroon where teachers work in difficult or unfavourable circumstances (West, 1960) where factors, such as large classes, the shortage or complete absence of material resources such as course books and technology, the influence of high stakes end-of-course examinations plus the multilingual backgrounds of many classrooms makes teaching almost unbearable, thus forcing teachers to adapt practical solutions to, indeed pragmatic responses to the realities of their contexts (Kuchah & Smith, 2011). What is more, the method, postmethod and best practice

discourses reviewed above have focused on considerably 'favourable' contexts ignoring a large part of the ELT community that is not as privileged as the resource-packed 'north' contexts. The so-called 'advanced methodologies' from the West have in a way disadvantaged teachers and learners in many places by failing to recognise their contextual circumstances (Ellis, 1996; Ha, 2004; Liu, 1998) and in spite of arguments raised by researchers (e.g. Ha, 2004) that practices of teachers are to an extent culture-bound and as such what one culture perceives as culturally appropriate should not be used as a basis for devaluing other cultural pedagogic practices which may represent similar qualities differently, biased and even condescending perspectives of non-BANA pedagogies still exist. As Maley (2001) has pointed out, the 'mainstream literature' on ELT has continued to systematically neglect the realities of such circumstances as I have presented in section 2.7 above, even though they have constituted the commonest and, one would say, most prevalent kind of context for ELT in the world. He further argues that a majority of the contexts in which English is taught in the world is far removed from the ideal situations taken for granted in ELT debates dominated by the applied linguistics discourse community and the inventory of methodological ideas that emanate from such debates has little to offer by way of possible solutions to the problems of difficult circumstances and suggests that what is more likely to be workable in these circumstances are locally focussed efforts of a more broadly educational, rather than narrowly linguistic, nature.

Perhaps the time has come to turn to teachers' informed pragmatic responses to their particular classrooms and contexts to examine how they mediate between the demands of educational systems and the needs and abilities of their learners. A compelling need arises therefore to examine the value of the practices of teachers in mainstream state

schools from where, as Holliday (1994b) puts it, few examples of high-status methodologies have grown and as a consequence, teachers have often been forced to make difficult adaptations of methodology which do not really suit their context (p.13). Research into good teaching/teachers (Liu & Meng, 2009; Kutnick & Jules, 1993; Reichel & Arnon, 2009; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Jules & Kutnick, 1997; Arnon & Reichel, 2007) reveals that contextual and cultural factors amongst other things influence perceptions of good teachers and teaching. In studies that focus on young learners (e.g. Kutnick & Jules, 1993) good teaching is defined by a combination of teaching skill and good relationships with pupils while studies that explore perceptions of teachers' good teaching is defined by how well teachers establish personal relationships with students (Beishuizen et al., 2001) but also by personal qualities and knowledge of the subject taught as well as didactic knowledge. Prabhu (1990) takes the discussion further by showing the different factors that a teacher needs to conceptualise from in order to arrive at a *sense of plausibility*, that is, a theory or pedagogic intuition of how learning takes place and how teaching causes or supports it:

Teachers need to operate with some personal conceptualisation of how their teaching leads to desired learning – with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them. The conceptualisation may arise from a number of different sources, including a teacher's experience in the past as a learner (with interpretations of how teaching received at that time did or did not support one's learning) a teacher's earlier experience of teaching (with similar interpretations from the teaching end), exposure to one or more methods while training as a teacher (with some subjective evaluation of the methods concerned and perhaps a degree of identification with one or another of them), what a teacher knows or thinks of other teachers' actions or opinions, and perhaps a teacher's experience as parent or caretaker (p. 172).

It is the search for features of pedagogic practice that emanate from this sense of plausibility within the context of large state primary school classes in Cameroon that constitutes the focus of the present study. My purpose is to pursue a bottom-up,

classroom- and workshop-based approach to identifying pedagogic practices that are considered by both learners and teachers as appropriate to the particular context of Cameroonian primary school teachers, with the aim of arriving at a model of teacher development that facilitates the appropriation of (some of) these practices. As research has shown, a fundamental reason for the policy-practice disconnection is the failure to fully consider the social, cultural and educational needs of teachers in the policy/innovation conception process. The very top-down nature in which such policies/innovations are transmitted to, and imposed on practitioners, the aura of pedagogic devaluation of teachers' current practices that permeates pedagogic innovations and TT&D workshops, and the consequent rejection of these policies/innovations by practitioners militate for a more teacher-friendly approach to pedagogic innovation and teacher development. It is in exploring the positive features of teachers' practices as determined by their sense of plausibility and building on these to develop a dynamic professional basis for incorporating innovations which are firmly anchored to their contextual realities that we can attempt to bridge the policy-practice gap. To achieve this, I propose to investigate shared features of contextually plausible pedagogic practices so as to establish a database of practices which can inform a framework upon which subsequent researchers and policy makers can build to arrive at contextually appropriate decisions that reflect and are reflected in the reality of a particular community of practitioners. In doing this, I take the precaution not to define a priori categories, but to observe, elicit and record these features as they emerge from the field. In this way, my study is an attempt to implement Holliday's (1994b) argument for an ELT methodology which is appropriate to the social context within which it is developed and used.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.0. Introduction

This chapter sets out to present, explain and justify the research design and procedure adopted for this study. It begins by presenting the research paradigm underlying the study and goes ahead to describe the research design and methodological procedure for participant selection, data generation and analysis. Matters of validity and reliability of data collection instruments as well as ethical and other field issues are also explained.

3.1 Paradigmatic Position

In order to provide an explicit and comprehensive analysis of the research approach which guided this study, it is important to start by presenting the ‘spirit’ behind the study. Creswell (2007) argues that the research design process in qualitative research begins with paradigms and the philosophical assumptions that researchers make in deciding to undertake a study and that good research requires that these assumptions be made clear in the writing of the study and, at a minimum, that the researcher shows awareness of the influence of these on the conduct of inquiry. In this section, I propose to make explicit the paradigmatic stance I take in carrying out this study so as to dissipate any claim to a value-free investigation.

Guba & Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a set of basic beliefs representing a world view ‘that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts’ (p.107). Because such

a set of beliefs can be very subjective and in extreme cases, even religiously misleading about the nature and essence of reality and knowledge, there is a need for the researcher to invest in understanding his own belief systems so as to produce research that demonstrates its worth (Richards 2003, p. 33). To do this, I present the ontological and epistemological stances guiding this study so as to situate my study within the tenets of social constructivism which largely informs my research.

3.1.1. Ontological and epistemological stances

Ontology has to do with the nature of our beliefs about reality and what we can know about it. A key ontological debate has to do with the existence (or not) of a captive social reality and how this should be constructed. In social research the key ontological questions include

...whether or not social reality exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a common, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and whether or not social behaviour is governed by “laws” that can be seen as immutable or generalisable’ (Snape and Spencer 2003, p. 11).

My ontological stance is akin with relativism, a variant of idealism (see Snape and Spencer 2003; and Richards 2003) which holds that there exists no external or even single shared social reality independent of our beliefs and understanding and that reality can only be known through socially constructed meanings. In this study, reality is perceived as both subjective and multiple both from the part of individual participants and of the researcher (Creswell 2007). This explains why I place emphasis on participants’ own interpretations of their actions, quoting directly from them and providing evidence of different perspectives that emerged in the course of the study and complementing these with my own understandings.

Epistemology on its part has to do with the nature of (our beliefs concerning) knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Snape and Spencer 2003; Creswell 2007) as well as between knower and known (Richards 2003). It addresses questions such as ‘how can we know about reality and what is the basis of our knowledge?’ (Snape and Spencer 2003, p. 13) A characteristic feature of an epistemological stance is demonstrated in the researcher’s attempts to lessen the distance between himself/herself and the researched (Creswell 2007). In this study, I adopt a ‘subjectivist’ stance, that is, I see knowledge as something created through interaction between the world and the individual and it is by exploring the relationships between myself and my research participants that a better interpretation of their practices and common understandings of these are constructed (Richards, 2003).

The interactive relationship developed for this study was achieved by the researcher spending a period of seven months (from March to September 2010) communicating with each of the teachers by phone and ‘socialising’ with them by conversing about different subjects of mutual interest. On arrival in Cameroon in early October 2010, I met with the selected teachers together in each of the two towns and we chatted over a drink while I explained further what my study was going to involve and sought reconfirmation of their willingness to participate. Because my main purpose was to understand the underlying beliefs behind teachers’ practices and the pedagogic decisions they make and act upon in the language class, an interactive relationship allowed us to co-construct meaning of their practices through stimulated recalls (see 3.3.5.2) and group discussions (see 3.3.5.3). In this way, and through extended rapport with them and their learners, it is difficult to claim that we did not impact on the values of one another in the course of the research. Consequently my interpretation of their perspectives is

value-laden and as such cannot be said to be an entirely objective representation of the social reality I was in contact with.

The ontological and epistemological stances explained above situate this study within the paradigmatic tenets of 'social-constructivism'. I hold the constructivist view expounded by Richards (2003) that 'knowledge and truth are created rather than discovered and that reality is pluralistic. [Consequently I] seek to understand not the essence of a real world but the richness of a world that is socially determined' (p. 39). To achieve this, I use research instruments like stimulated recall and focus group interviews which allow participants' voices to be heard. What is more, I take the idea of focusing on the positive from appreciative inquiry (Grant & Humphries 2006; Mohr & Watkins 2002; van Buskirk, 2002; van der Haar & Hosking 2004) to elicit, generate and interpret participants' views in ways that convey the positive values that they bring to the social world of the classroom.

3.2. Research Design

There is a general consensus amongst researchers (e.g. Berg, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Graham, 1999; Kvale 1996; Ritchie 2003) that the research design selected for a study is determined by the nature of the study which in turn is determined to a large extent, by the research questions (Bryman, 2004; Mason, 2002). Although this study adopts a research design which is dovetailed to its research questions, its methodological procedure is informed by a pragmatist approach to research (Bryman 2007). In order to justify the research design and methodological procedure for this study therefore, it is necessary to re-state the research questions, showing what further details will be investigated for each question:

1. What are young learners' perceptions of good English language teaching practices?
2. What do teachers perceive as appropriate teaching practices within their working context?
 - a. What are their perceptions of appropriate teaching?
 - b. What are the discernable features of such practices in their actual teaching?
 - c. What reasons do teachers give for their practices?
3. What are teacher-participants' perceptions of their workshop experience of exploring insights into good/appropriate teaching practices?
 - a. What is their assessment of the nature of the workshop?
 - b. What are the perceived benefits, to teachers, of their experience of appraising lessons

To obtain data that will enable me to answer the questions above, it was necessary to adopt a research design that would provide solid classroom evidence which would help me explore the social reality in its profundity. To achieve this, I draw from a commitment to pragmatism as a way of rationalising the conjoint use of different research methods and traditions. The emergence of pragmatism as both a method of inquiry and a device for the settling of battles between research purists of the quantitative versus qualitative research schools on the one hand and the more practical-minded scientists has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Bryman 2006; 2007; Maxcy, 2003). In this study I adopt a within-method triangulation, inspired by the pragmatist perspective and aligns with the argument that good social science is problem-

driven and not methodology-driven in the sense that it employs those methods that for a given problematic situation best help answer the research questions at hand (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 432). The present study therefore is an exploratory study which incorporates input, in the form of videoed lessons, from seven teachers (cases) as well as stimulated recall data from the cases and perspectives from child-group interviews with students into a workshop group discussion with a larger group of teachers from the same contexts as the students and seven cases. My purpose is to investigate features of context-appropriate methodology in under-resourced large English medium primary school classes in both Anglophone and Francophone contexts in Cameroon through observation of classroom practice, and interaction with both teachers and learners. To achieve this, the study adopted a case study approach to collecting insightful data from a small group of seven recommended teachers, which data was used to generate discussions and further insights from, - as well as experiment an intervention approach of - a teacher development model with a larger group of teachers within the two contexts.

3.2.1. The role of cases in the qualitative study

As stated above, this is an exploratory study that uses cases to provide input for an in-depth exploration of contextually appropriate features of ELT pedagogy. The use of cases in this research draws from insights in case study research (e.g. Creswell 2007; Davis & Sutton 2011; Graham 2000) which defines cases as ‘multiple bounded systems’ (Creswell 2007, p. 73) from which data involving multiple sources of information – in the case of this study, non-participant observation, videoed lessons and stimulated recall – can be collected and analysed for a specific research problematic. However, because in social sciences a case is never fully ‘bounded’ (Graham, 2000), I have, in this study, considered the seven cases as ‘units of analysis [...] that have some degree of self-

regulation, but which also require reference to wider realms of social interaction and organisation to be understood. (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 166).

In this regard the 7 teachers (*cases*) from the two English-medium school contexts (Anglophone and Francophone) were used to generate stimuli material in the nature of videoed lessons and stimulated recall which were later examined by, or incorporated into focus group discussions with a large group of teachers from each of the contexts. This was done both in recognition of the micro and macro factors that impact on the pedagogic behaviour of each individual *case*, and also to relate each *case* to its broader context which in this study is the setting within which they operate. The use of Cases therefore was to (1) generate an insightful picture of perspectives and practices from a small pool of teachers (the 7 *Cases*) (2) generate an informed understanding of contextual factors that may impact upon teachers' practices (3) set up a basis for further exploration from videos of classroom events selected by the *Cases* and (4) set up a basis for exploring a model of teacher development and a bottom-up approach to innovation dissemination. Figure 1 below shows the link between the cases and the larger group of teachers from whom further insights of contextual practices were generated.

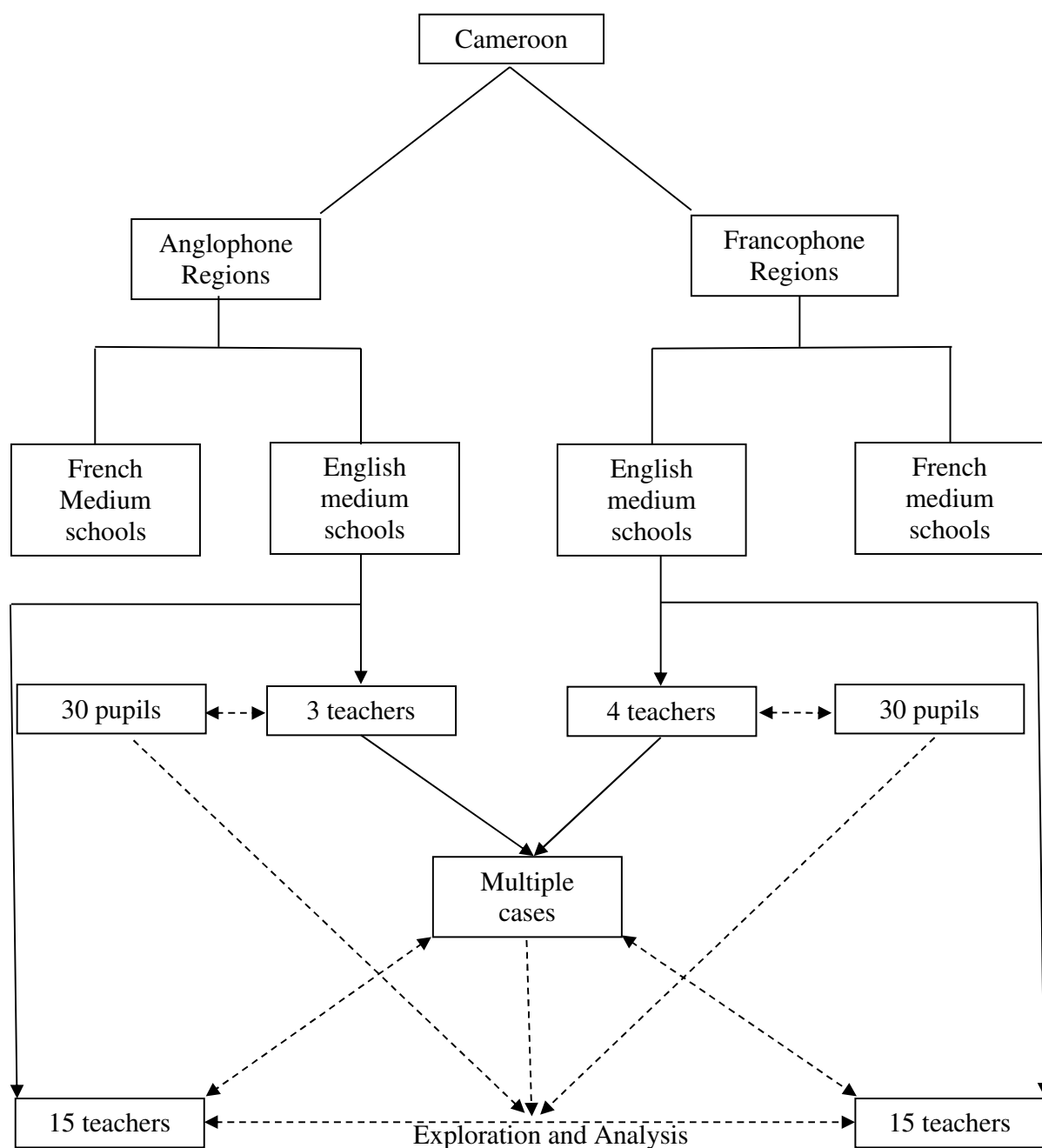


Figure 1: Relationship between data generated from cases and the exploratory study.

The use of cases as a basis for generating data for a broader study is not unique to this study (see Johnson and Christensen 2004; Creswell 1994; Dornyei 2007 for different combinations of research designs). Previous studies (see for example Gable, 1994) have used cases as a means of generating data for a quantitative research study. A major distinctive feature of the present study is that cases are used both to generate data for,

and in combination with, a further exploratory qualitative study. In other words, I use data from cases both as stimuli for, and in conjunction with qualitative data generated from a larger group of teachers in order to obtain concrete, context-dependent knowledge which, in a study of human affairs, could be considered more contextually valuable than the search for predictive theories and universals (Flyvbjerg, 2004) of large scale quantitative data. My purpose was to get as close as possible to practice, to get a first hand sense of what actually goes on in classrooms (Eisner, 2001) and the beliefs underlying this, in order to better understand the complexities and conundrums of the immensely complicated social world of the classroom by seeking to understand the patterns and purposes of the 'behaviour' of teachers and to provide insights that will enrich our understanding of their actions (Richards 2003) within their different contexts.

Rossmann & Rallis (2003) offer five defining characteristics of qualitative research, namely that it (a) is naturalistic, (b) draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of research participants, (c) is context based, (d) emergent and evolving and (e) fundamentally interpretive. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as

...a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversation, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p.3).

The two perspectives above offer the key defining qualities of qualitative research which guided this study. Firstly, because of the exploratory and naturalistic nature of the study, it was only natural to adopt the qualitative research approach, allowing me to explore the issues under study in their full complexity within the ecological/natural environment in

which they unravel. One strength of qualitative research is that, when skilfully handled, it helps the researcher explore the complexity of the social world and by being person-centred, provides insights that enrich understanding, allowing the researcher to act in ways that relate him to the participants (in this case, teachers and pupils) and context (classroom) being studied (Richards, 2003). Secondly, the study made use of multiple 'representations' partly by obtaining data from both teachers and learners, but also through the use of multiple instruments of data collection, namely, classroom observation notes, stimulated recall, child-group interviews, and focus group interviews (workshop discussions). This did not only safeguard the reliability of the data collected by providing me with opportunities to crosscheck for consistency, convergence and divergence but also, by the variety of information collected, added to the richness of the data. In a nutshell therefore, the research design for this study was adapted to respond to the following exigencies, summarised by Richards (2003, p. 10):

- **Study human actors in natural settings, in the context of their ordinary, everyday world.** This was achieved by working with teachers and learners within the school/classroom environment and observing them without directly and consciously interfering with the day-to-day flow of activities in the schools selected. It must be mentioned here that because of the potential for me and my camera to be intrusive, I spent a minimum of two weeks in each town, sitting in classrooms and filming lessons which were eventually discarded. In this way, the children (and their teachers) were considerably used to my presence and my camera before the actual research started, but I still took special precaution not to influence classroom activities by sitting at the back of the class and placing my camera at the back, away from the point of focus of learners.

- **Seek to understand the meanings and significance of these actions from the perspective of those involved.** This was possible through interviews, discussions and stimulated recall with the teachers and learners directly involved in the study as well as in the group discussion I held with other groups of teachers from within the same context as those filmed. More importantly, I took care, both during the stimulated recall and the group discussions with teachers not to reveal my own opinions about their lessons, but to encourage them to identify ‘critical’ moments in their lessons and talk about them. This was further reinforced by the care and system of data analysis I adopted which placed the representations of the participants above mine.
- **Focus on a small number of individuals, groups or settings.** To achieve this, I focussed on the practices of seven teachers from two localities (settings) in Cameroon and only extended this by involving a limited group of their colleagues to reflect on their practices. By working with a small group of participants, I was able to probe deeper into their perspectives to achieve depth and detail which may not have been possible with a large number of participants.
- **Employ a range of methods in order to establish different perspectives on the relevant issues.** In this respect, I combined data from observations, interviews, discussions and stimulated recall to establish the perspectives that emerged from the study. The different instruments and methods of data collection enabled me to elicit information not only from different participants but most importantly from different angles even with the same

participant, safeguarding as such the perspectives of each participant and the whole and therefore ensuring the depth and richness of the data collected.

- **Base analysis on a wide range of features.** To achieve this, I approached fieldwork without constraining myself by predetermined categories of analysis and this contributed to the depth, openness and detail of my enquiry, producing a wealth of detailed information about the beliefs and practices of my participants (Patton 1990, p. 14). Besides, in my decisions about analysis of the data I opted for an appropriately wide range of features emanating from the perspectives of the participants and only sought to highlight points of convergence and divergence in the various perspectives as a basis for further investigation. My analysis therefore takes on board several and diverse issues and actions arising from the data collected

In order to provide a more explicit and comprehensive analysis of the qualitative research approach which guided this study, I will now present the methodological procedure as well as the research strategies used to collect, organise and analyse the data collected for the study.

3.2.2. The role of Video input

Research that legitimizes teachers' knowledge (e.g. Lockhart & Richards, 1994; Edge, 2001; Wallace, 1998; Allright, 2003; 2005; Allright and Hanks, 2009; Walberg, 1977; Borg, 2003) has emphasised the importance of reflection in teaching leading to, amongst other things, a rise in the use of video in teacher development programmes (Rosenstein, 2002). In addition to the fact that video cameras could be less intrusive than groups of teachers observing a class at the same time, videos provide real classroom situations for (1) self-evaluation of their own teaching (Struyk & McCoy, 1993), (2) a deep viewing that helps them to understand the workings of their own classrooms better (Pailliotet, 1995) (3) stimulating a teacher's recollection of his/her thoughts and consequent

action(s) at a particular time in a lesson (Wear & Harris, 1994; Kleinfeld & Noordhoff, 1990), and (4) promoting reflection, around *cases*, about pedagogic innovation through reflective tasks that help them focus on videoed case teachers' experience and their own experience (Jimenez Raya & Vieira, 2010; Jimenez Raya, 2011). While it is hoped that participants will in some ways evaluate themselves, it is principally the last three objectives that I seek to attain. The second and third objectives relate to the *Cases* in the sense that it offers them the opportunity to see the dynamics of, and hitherto 'hidden' realities of their classroom but also that, in reflecting on the ideas behind their actions, they will develop an awareness as well as critical insights into the (personal) theories behind their practices. This awareness can be a starting point for further development and refinement of personal theories and practices especially in a context like Cameroon where teacher development is still largely built on a transmission paradigm.

The fourth objective relates to the second group of teachers in this study (see sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3.2) in the sense that *Cases* (see sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3.1.) provide a basis for generating analyses grounded in pedagogical content knowledge which can eventually empower teachers to deal with context-specific teaching problems (see for example Vieira, 2009). The videos in this study provide 'natural classrooms' from contexts familiar (and akin) to participants own realities. The thrust of the *case* approach to teacher development as used in this study is to approach *case* observation as an 'opportunity for teachers to help each other [as well as the researcher reflect on, and] collect information that would be useful to them and which they could not obtain on their own...; [to] see themselves as co-researchers collaborating for each other's benefit' (Richards & Lockhart, 1992, p.10). Because self-reflection may involve inhibition in in-service teacher training, the cases here are meant to encourage teachers to first reflect on the practices of other teachers as a starting point for eventual self-reflection. This perspective is supported by Borg (1998) who claims that drawing from vivid portraits of teaching can provide a platform for 'other-oriented' inquiry which may facilitate self-reflection.

3.3. Methodological procedure

The methodological procedure adopted for this study is informed by literature in the area of qualitative research expounded by Creswell (2007), Kumar (2005), Marshall and Rossman (2006) and Snape and Spencer (2003). These authors, although using different terminologies to describe the process/features, do agree that qualitative research has to be built on sound methodologically grounded procedures that take into consideration the complex interconnections between researcher and the researched within a given historical context. This study draws from procedural recommendations by these authors to establish the methodological steps taken and the important considerations made in the process of data collection and analysis. I take into consideration Connolly's (2008) assertion that 'the research process is inevitably a product of the relationship forged between the researcher and the research participants and will therefore ultimately reflect the decisions made and approaches taken by the researcher as well as the particular responses adopted by the participants.' (P. 174)

3.3.1. Locating the setting and population

This study was conducted in state primary schools in the capital towns of two regions in Cameroon: the South West region (Buea) and the Centre region (Yaounde). While the former is an English speaking region, the second is predominantly French speaking, but because of its cosmopolitan nature, has a large number of English medium primary schools that take children from both Francophone and Anglophone backgrounds. Historically, Buea was the colonial capital of Southern Cameroons (British protectorate) while Yaounde was the capital of 'La République du Cameroun' (French protectorate) and as such, both epitomise the contextual differences that have impacted on the educational ideals of Anglophones and Francophones respectively. Because the

pedagogic guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Basic Education do not take into consideration the geo-political and linguistic realities of Francophone and Anglophone regions separately, but sees them as one unified entity, it was necessary to see how teachers from both parts of the country cope with the different challenges they encounter in their working context. There could be no better settings than these two towns which epitomise Cameroon's dual colonial heritage.

Upper primary classes were selected (Level three, that is, classes five and six) for three reasons. Firstly the course content for this level and the content of the end-of-primary school certificate examination are the same in all English medium schools irrespective of whether they are situated in Anglophone (e.g., Buea) or Francophone (e.g. Yaounde) regions of the country. At this level, basic learning concepts are introduced in class five and extended in class six. It is teachers from this level that were targeted on the grounds that for pedagogic consistency, it is necessary to select classes where the same course content is being delivered as course content may sometimes influence pedagogic activities. What is more, as these classes were selected from schools within the same geo-political and socio-cultural environment they could be said to share the same macro-ecological features. Secondly, I could have as well selected another level of learners based on pedagogic consistency but because I intended to have a focus group interview with pupils it can be argued that this would be easier with older children who have a longer learning experience and greater exposure to people who do not constitute part of their immediate home or school environment. Added to this is the fact that, from a purely linguistic perspective, these learners presented me with a better opportunity to do interviews in English, French or Pidgin English without having to face the risk of talking to them in the different L1s as would have been the case with the younger learners.

Thirdly, because of the strong examination-oriented nature of the context, and the fact that academic performance at official examination is often seen as a measure of good teaching (cf. Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986), the pressure for good results is often more on the final level teachers than on the other teachers in the school. For this reason, final level teachers are more disposed than their colleagues of lower classes to grapple with macro and micro level influences of the context and as such are better suited for a research of this nature that focuses on contextual reality. Yet it must be acknowledged that, because teaching is not an exact science, the notion of ‘good’ teaching is not always straight forward. Past studies (e.g. Peterson & Comeaux, 1987; Sabers, Cushing & Berlinder, 1991; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Leinhardt, Putnam, Stern & Baxter 1991; Shulman, 1992; Tsui, 2003) have shown that researchers are yet unable to agree on what constitutes good/expert teaching and things can be even more complex at exam-level classes where there is a risk that the teachers identified as ‘good’ could in reality be efficient child-crammers rather than excellent pedagogues. Whatever the case, my purpose in this study is not to impose my judgements but to rely on the judgements of stakeholders. For this reason, it is the perspectives of children, their teachers and their peers which matter, not mine. Underneath the reasons mentioned above however, is my personal interest in this level; having worked with pupils and teachers at this level for over a decade, it was easier for me to ground my interview questions in the discourse of the children (Pinter 2011) than I would have done with lower level classes I am less familiar with.

3.3.2. Research Participants

This study made use of data from three groups of participants drawn from state primary schools in the two towns, Buea and Yaounde. The first group of participants (the cases)

consisted of seven (7) experienced and ‘good’ upper primary teachers, a second group of thirty (30) experienced (but not less deserving) upper primary school teachers and a third group of sixty (60) pupils selected from the classes of the seven ‘good’ teachers’ classes. From the classes of the seven ‘good’ teachers, I collected primary data for this study through observation field notes, and stimulated recall interviews. The seven teachers were drawn from a pool of recommended teachers based on the constructions of the different pedagogic authorities and professionals I contacted and following a procedure explained below. From the second and third group of participants, that is the 30 teachers and 60 pupils, I collected data in the form of focus group discussion, interviews as well as written descriptions and feedback around the pedagogic practices of the ‘good’ teachers with the aim of gaining insights from teachers’ and learners’ perspectives. Table 3 below presents a summary of the role of research participants in the data collection process.

Table 3: Summary of role of research participants in data collection process

Group	Nº of Participants	Activities	Method of data collection	Research questions
Group 1 Cases	7 teachers	Classroom teaching and selection of most successful lesson each.	-Observation notes -Stimulated recall	2 and 3
Group 2	30 teachers	Watch video recordings of lessons from group 1 and identify features of good practice/ appropriate pedagogy	-workshop discussion -Written feedback	2 and 3
Group 3	60 pupils	Talk about what they like about their teachers’ practice in English classes	Focus group interviews Written descriptions.	1

3.3.3. Selection of Participants

As Creswell (2007) argues, qualitative research typically makes use of purposeful sampling because the researcher selects participants who can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. The selection of participants for this study was purposeful drawing on what Miles & Huberman (1994) refer to as ‘criterion’ sampling, but because I retained a certain amount of flexibility, there was also room for ‘opportunistic’ sampling. Criterion sampling includes participants that meet some criterion and as such is useful for quality assurance. Opportunistic sampling allows the researcher to follow new leads and to take advantage of the unexpected (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 28).

3.3.3.1. First group of participants: *Cases*

The selection criteria for the primary participants (that is six of the seven *cases*) for this study was criterion-based, informed by research in teacher expertise. To minimise the shortcomings of criterion-based selection (e.g. Peterson & Comeaux, 1987; Sabers et al., 1991; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Leinhardt et al., 1991; Shulman, 1992; Tsui, 2003) I started out by adopting a combination of criteria, but also allowed for flexibility by relying on opportunistic sampling, and it is this flexibility which guided me to incorporate the perspective of learners and include a seventh teacher in this group (see figure 2 below). In adopting a combination of criteria, the present study also drew from ecological research by focusing on the perspectives of professionals working within the macro and micro context of each of the two locations for the study. For this reason, I did not set out to provide a list of predefined categories, but relied on categories derived from recommendations made by local stakeholders including pedagogic inspectors, head teachers and teachers in each of the towns. In all, I received thirty six (36) letters of

recommendation from the stakeholders mentioned above and from these some teachers were recommended more than once, bringing the total number of recommended good teachers to twenty three (23) with 13 from Buea and 10 from Yaounde. It is from the different letters of recommendation (see appendix 1) that I was later able to identify categories which helped me form a set of selection criteria. However, to ensure that the recommendations reflected the purpose of this study, that is, pedagogic practice, and to fit my study within the framework of observable contextual realities, I did a further filtering of teachers from the list of 23 on the basis of the following criteria emerging from the letters of recommendation:

1. Recommendations based on pedagogic practice, that is, where the letter(s) highlighted strengths related to teaching and not just behaviour and service to the administration.
2. Classroom size: The larger the more contextually true.
3. Performance of the school in official examinations in the previous years.
4. Previous experience in presenting model lessons to colleagues,
5. Willingness of each recommended teacher to participate in the study.

While the first three criteria are based on contextual variables as outcomes of professional practice, the last two can be seen as research-oriented variables which have no relationship with the quality of the teachers. I included them as important factors that could influence the conduct of the research itself. The assumption was that a teacher who has presented lessons in front of peers and administrators is less likely to be intimidated by the presence of an outsider than one who has not. In the same way, it can be argued that learners who are used to having observers in their classroom will be less

distracted by the presence of an outsider and will as such be less unnatural than learners without the experience.

The criteria above helped me to further reduce the number of teachers from 23 to 12, that is, 7 from Buea and 5 from Yaounde but because my intention was to have a limited group of 6 teachers – that is, three from each town - the next step was to determine which of these teachers were most confident in teaching English language, since primary teachers in Cameroon are general subject teachers and may have different levels of confidence for different subjects. To do this, I asked each teacher to list, in order of preference, three subjects they like to teach and through this, was able to retain 3 teachers from each of the towns, by first selecting those who had English language as first choice and then those who placed it second. Although the teachers knew what the focus of my study was going to be, this activity was used both to help me reduce the number of teachers to 6, but also to be sure of the degree of confidence in English language teaching of the teachers selected. Two teachers each in Buea and Yaounde had English as first choice, while the other two retained, placed it second. The seventh teacher, included in Yaounde was recommended by the learners and did not appear in the initial list of 23 teachers recommended by the different stakeholders (see 3.3.5.4.2 j below). In all, there were seven teachers from six classrooms.

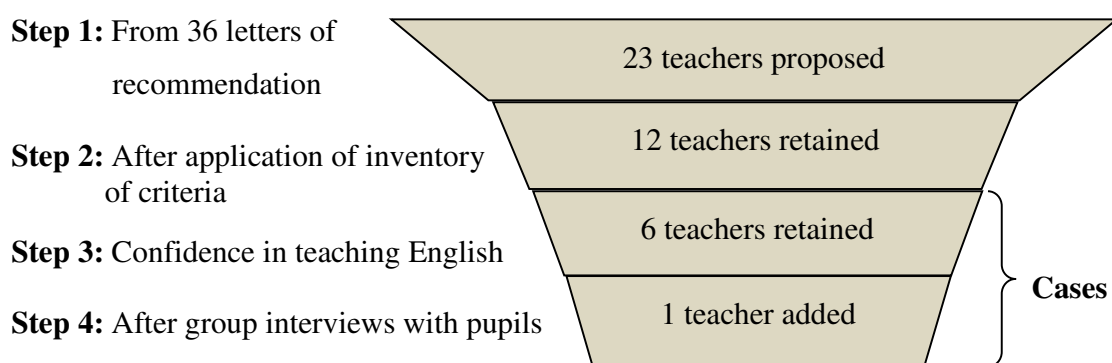


Figure 2: Summary of selection process of *Cases*

The seven teachers retained as Cases for this study were made up of four males and three females with different professional experiences as presented in table??? Below.

Table 4: Presentation of group 1 teachers (Cases)

Case	Town	Teaching Experience	Other information
Kingsley	Yaounde	8 years all in a final year class	Trained in an English medium training college and has taught in the same school in Francophone context all his career.
Ivo	Yaounde	6 years with three years in a final year class.	Worked as a security guard before training in a French medium college. Has taught in the same school in a Francophone context all his career.
George	Yaounde	12 years including 11 years in a final year class.	Has taught in the same school in Francophone context for all his career.
Martha	Yaounde	17 years including 12 years in a final year class.	Trained in English medium college and worked for 4 years in an Anglophone context and 13 years in Francophone context.
Grace	Buea	12 years including 6 years in a final year class.	Has taught in 2 schools in Anglophone contexts
Josephine	Buea	13 years including 9 years in a final year class	Trained in English medium college and has taught in the same school for all her career.
Alberto	Buea	13 years including 11 years teaching a final year class.	Trained in English medium college and has taught in 3 schools in Anglophone contexts, including 9 years in a private school.

3.3.3.2. Second Group of Participants: Workshop-group Teachers

The second group of participants was made up of 30 upper primary teachers, 15 of whom were selected from each of the two towns on the basis of the proximity of their schools to the schools where the first group of teachers teach. This was to ensure that their contextual realities - socio-cultural, educational, administrative and economic and otherwise - were similar to those of the first group of teachers. This group included all the teachers previously recommended but not retained in the first group (i.e. 17 teachers) and 13 others who by their teaching experience and the fact that they teach examination level classes cannot be said to be less deserving of the status of good teachers. The additional teachers were recommended in Buea, by the regional pedagogic inspector who assisted me in my initial meeting with the teachers and in Yaoundé, through the local teacher association. An additional criterion for selecting these teachers was their availability, willingness and acceptance to participate in a focus group discussion on the lessons of the seven 'good' teachers.

The 15 teachers from Buea were made up of 13 females and 2 males, a situation which appropriately reflects the gender demographics in the teacher population of the town. In fact, in the three schools where the three observed teachers worked, there was only one male teacher in one of the schools, while the other two schools had no male teacher, except, in one case, the head teacher. On the other hand, of the 15 teachers from Yaounde, 10 were male and 5 female. This can partly be explained by the fact that although the teacher population in Yaoundé is equally dominated by female teachers, the gender representation at the upper primary level is predominantly male. In many other public and private schools I have visited over the years in Yaoundé the early year teachers were all female while level two teachers were split between male and female

and male teachers dominated level 3. In the three schools in which this study was carried out, each final year class had two teachers making a total of 6 teachers, only one of whom was a woman. The gender imbalance in both towns, in addition to not being an issue in the context of the present study was therefore not surprising to me. The teaching experience of all 30 teachers ranged from 4 to 23 years.

3.3.3.3. Third Group: students

The third group of participants consisted of 60 pupils, 10 of whom were selected from each of the classes of the first group of participants. These pupils, who were all within the age range of 10 to 12, were selected on the basis of my observation of their ability to express themselves freely in class and with their peers out of class. My observations and final selection of pupils was further guided by recommendations in the existing literature on interviewing children in friendship groups (see for example Holland, Mauthner and Sharpe, 1996; Lewis, 1992; Spencer and Flin, 1990; Mayall, 2008). To achieve this, I spent recreational and sporting periods playing or refereeing different games –football, hopscotch, tug-of-war, jump rope, dodge ball, Chinese jump rope, clapping/singing game – with both boys and girls but also chatted with them on the way to and from school or whenever the opportunity arose. On the whole, I spent a minimum of two weeks socialising with pupils in each town before the actual data collection started. In this way, I was able not only to build up my own relationship with the children, but also to identify ‘friendship’ groups and negotiate interview sessions with them, first individually and then in their groups.

3.3.4. Role and perspective of researcher and research participants

As stated in section 3.1.1 above, before arriving in Cameroon, I was in contact with the selected teachers by phone and (where possible) by email from March to September 2010, within which period, the participant selection process described above was completed. This initial contact also aimed at building a rapport with teachers so as to minimise any influences of both my role as pedagogic inspector and my eventual presence in their classrooms. As much as possible and necessary, I explained the purpose of my study in ways that would enable them handle their lessons as naturally as possible. Through several personal phone calls in which each teacher and I discussed different topics of mutual interest to us including sports, music, cultural values, family life, governance etc, I was able to considerably bridge the power gap and develop my own relationships with each teacher. What is more, as member of the local teacher association most of the teachers were familiar with me. In Yaounde, I had over the years developed a cordial working relationship with teachers and learners so that many of the children in Yaounde recognised me. This notwithstanding, prior to observation and interview, I spent a minimum of three weeks in each town, alternating between the three classrooms, familiarising myself with the classroom culture. In Buea, I benefitted from the help of a regional pedagogic inspector who was very popular and liked by both children and teachers who all called her 'auntie'. Through my association with her on the first days of my visit, it was easy for both the teachers and children to call me 'uncle' because she had introduced me as her friend. Throughout the data collection process, I sustained empathic neutrality and although the teachers (and their head teachers) were very keen on receiving evaluative comments on their lessons from me – as is normally the case when they are observed – I continued to explain that my purpose was not to assess their teaching, but to encourage them to appraise their lessons because they were

good teachers. Besides, the research instruments I used enabled both myself and the participants to explore social reality in terms of the processes rather than in static terms (Snape and Spencer, 2003) and it is for this reason that the focus of this study is not only on successful teaching events but also on how the teachers perceive and give meaning to the different teaching learning processes in the lessons observed and recorded. Maybe the significant role I played was during the focus group discussions with the second group of teachers where I encouraged teachers to focus mainly on the positive features of the videoed lessons they were watching. This was a significant shift from the traditional form of lesson analysis (locally referred to as 'lesson criticism') to a new and, I would say more empowering focus on 'lesson appraisal' – a well-received term we used all through the discussion.

In practical terms, I adopted, in my interactions with all research participants, the constructivist research model whereby knowledge is created and negotiated by both interviewer and interviewee (Holstein and Gulbrium 1995; see also the description of the 'traveler metaphor' perspective of conducting interviews in Kvale 1996, p. 4) through purposeful but unstructured conversation. This also meant in the case of my group interviews with learners, recognising them as 'strong resourceful' individuals who can work with adults towards solving problems and generating new ideas (Alderson 2005). In terms of classroom observation, I adopted a non-participant role, sitting behind the class and avoiding interaction during the lesson and even when I was used as an example to illustrate a lesson point (e.g. in a lesson on prepositions where the teacher made the sentence: 'Uncle Harry is sitting behind the class.') I avoided reacting in a way as to distract learners and influence the natural flow of each lesson.

3.3.5. Methods/Instruments of Data generation and collection

Ritchie (2003) makes a distinction between ‘naturally occurring’ data (participant and non-participant observation, documentary analysis, discourse analysis, conversation analyses) and ‘generated’ data (biographical methods e.g. life stories, in-depth individual interviews, focus groups/group discussions). This study made use of both naturally occurring data collected through classroom observation and generated data collected through individual and group interviews, stimulated recalls and focus group discussions. Table 4 below presents a summary of the research questions, the data collection instruments used and the participants involved in each case.

Table 5: Summary of data collection instruments used in this study

Research Question (RQ)	Instruments of data collection	Participants
1. What are young learners’ perceptions of good English language teaching practices?	Group interviews Written descriptions	Group 3 pupils
2. What do teachers perceive as appropriate teaching practices within their working context? 2a. What are their perceptions of appropriate teaching? 2b. What are the discernable features of such practices in their actual teaching? 2c. What reasons do teachers give for their practices?	Observation field notes (2b) Stimulated recall 2c) Focus group discussion (2a, b, c)	Group 1 teachers Group 2 teachers
3. What are teacher-participants’ perceptions of their experience of exploring insights into good/appropriate teaching practices? 3a. What is their assessment of the format of the workshop? 3b. What are the perceived benefits, to teachers, of their experience of appraising lessons	Focus group discussion Written feedback	Group 2 teachers

The data for this study was collected in two phases over a period of 5 months. In phase one, I spent three months collecting data from the first group of teachers (cases) and

their pupils while the second phase was given to workshops with the second group of teachers (see appendix 7 for summary of data collection schedule)

3.3.5.1. Non-participant observation

Observation in this study served two purposes: it helped me identify recurring patterns of behaviour and relationships in each teacher's classroom practice (Marshall and Rossman 2006) and also, provided some input from teachers' actions, for generating discussion in the stimulated recall (Gass and Mackey 2000) and focus group discussions in phase two. To achieve these, I adopted an open-ended observation protocol (Creswell 2007, p. 137) in which I recorded descriptive notes on one column and reflective notes on the other (see appendix 4). My observation, guided by strategies suggested by Wolcott (1994) was non-judgemental; concrete descriptions of what I observed and my reflections only acted as clues on issues to address in the stimulated recall and subsequent workshop discussion sessions.

A minimum of 10 English language lessons by each teacher was observed over a period of five weeks ranging from the initial three weeks period of my socialisation with learners to the period dedicated to actually filming the lessons from which the *cases* were each to select their most successful lesson (see 3.3.5.2). In each of these observation sessions, I placed my camera in one position at the back of the class and sat at another point behind the class in order to have a broad view of the classroom and also to avoid distracting learners and teacher in the course of the lesson. In all, for each teacher, I filmed five lessons recommended beforehand by the particular teacher on the basis of how confident they thought they had prepared for the lesson. At the end of the fifth lesson, the teacher selected three of the lessons which were then burned into DVDs

and handed to him/her. Each teacher had a period of 3 to five days to watch the videoed lessons at home and select which of them was their most successful. It is this lesson that formed the bases of the stimulated recall and the input for the focus group discussion with the second group of teachers.

3.3.5.2. Stimulated recall interviews

Stimulated recall interviews are generally used as opportunities for participants to engage in an introspection of their visible actions. Nunan (1992) explains that a stimulated recall 'enables teachers...as well as the researcher to present their various interpretations of what is going on in the classroom, and for these interpretations to be linked explicitly to the points in the lesson which gave rise to them' (p. 94). In this study, I did not give my interpretations of teachers' actions but rather, I used stimulated recall to raise some points from my observations and solicit the teachers' interpretations of the observed actions during their lessons. More importantly, I gave priority to the teachers' own observations of 'critical' incidents in their lessons as a basis for concrete discussions of what the teachers were doing, their interpretation of the incidents and encouraged them to explain the rationale behind these (see Borg, 2006, p. 219). Flanagan (1954) defines critical incidents as 'extreme behaviour, either outstandingly effective or ineffective with respect to attaining the general aims of the activity.' (p.338). In line with the positive focus of appreciative inquiry underlying the paradigmatic stance of this study, the major focus of stimulated recall was on effective behaviour by both teachers and learners. Practically, both teacher and researcher, in the course of watching the videoed lessons, identified and commented on incidents involving classroom interactions that they found to be particularly noticeable especially in enhancing learning in some way (Spencer-Oatey 2002). Table 5 is an adaptation from Gass & Mackey,

(2000) based on a classification of categories of introspection research (Faerch & Kasper, 1987) which illustrates the use of stimulated recall in this study.

Table 6: Basic categories and considerations for stimulated recall in this study

Category	Considerations in this study
Object of introspection	Teachers' pedagogic practices from videoed lesson and observation notes
Relationship to concrete action	The introspection was related to concrete classroom activities videoed for the purpose, in their natural setting, that is the usual classroom context
Temporal relation to action	A minimum of 10 English lessons per teacher were observed over a period of 5 weeks, but it was the last five lessons when the actual videoing of lessons began that constituted the basis for stimulated recall. Each teacher was given a period of between 3 and 5 days to watch 3 of their videoed lessons and select their most successful lesson. Because the lessons were on video and the stimulated recall made use of these, the time lapse between the lesson and the stimulated recall posed little problem.
Participant training	One of the criteria for selection of my participants was their experience in presenting lessons to peers. This means that my research participants did not need any particular training for this activity as they were used to reflecting back on their lessons and being questioned by other teachers and pedagogic authorities. However, I encouraged them to watch the selected lesson several times at home, identify actions/events which resonated to them and raise them during the stimulated recall session. During the recall sessions,
Stimulus for recall and elicitation procedure	The stimulus for recall used in this study was audio visual, that is, video recorded lessons which were replayed entirely, with both teacher and researcher pausing at particular points to generate discussions. I also used their lesson plans and referred to events in other observed lessons that were consistent with or divergent from the selected lesson. The basic pattern for the stimulated recall was to encourage the teachers to explain the reasons behind their actions, reactions, behaviour in relation to the methodological choices they adopted in the process of the lesson.

3.3.5.3. Focus group interviews/discussions

Some research questions can be best answered by asking people questions on a one-to-one basis through individual interviews, but when the focus is, as in the case of the present study, to investigate shared values of pedagogic practices, it was important to

conduct focus group discussions with teachers and learners from the same contexts with the teachers who constituted the case study. Focus group interviews create multiple lines of communication which offer participants a convenient environment for sharing ideas, beliefs and attitudes with peers (Madriz, 2003). David & Sutton (2011, p.134) argue that while focus groups offer the ethical advantage of giving the participants greater control over the direction of the discussion, the ethical downside is that given the group nature of the talk, the researcher is unable to offer the degree of confidentiality available in a one-to-one interview format. In the context of this study, this weakness was minimised by the fact that the focus was on the positives rather than on the negatives. In other words, in the two sets of groups – i.e. teachers and pupils – participants were encouraged to talk about the positive features of the practices of the first group of teachers and of language teaching in general and any negatives that emerged occurred naturally. By insisting on the positive aspects, my intention was not only to promote an “enhancement paradigm” (Wallace, 1999) which empowers teachers by giving value to their work, but also to eliminate any suspicions on the part of participants that may restrain their participation. The shift from the traditional use of the term ‘lesson criticism’ to ‘lesson appraisal’ created an important positive impact on the overall participation of teachers, while for learners, the focus on the ‘good things teachers do when teaching English’ encouraged them to be expressive. Another advantage of the group interview is that it offers the advantage of allowing the talk of members of the group to stimulate other members of the group (Dörnyei, 2007; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Pinter, 2011). However, there is the danger that dominant individuals within a group may control the discussion, either in terms of setting the tone or in terms of amount of time they spend talking. This may lead to a discussion in which less dominant individuals either don’t say very much or tend to go along with the views of more vocal participants (David &

Sutton, 2011, p. 134). To avoid this pitfall, I tried to minimise the dominance of particular participants, especially in the children's group, interspersing the general discussion with some controlled periods to ensure that everyone expressed their view. In some cases, I exploited the strong view of some dominant participants to elicit individual reactions from the rest of the group.

3.3.5.3.1. Dynamics of focus groups: teachers

Prior to organising a two-day workshop with the second group of teachers in each town, I met with them over a drink to discuss the goal of the study, their availability, venue and conduct of the workshop. I explained the purpose of my study insisting on the acknowledged quality of their practices and the value of their opinions about the lessons to be appraised. I also used this meeting to check that they were available and willing to take part in the study as well as to try to dissipate the power-barrier between us. Because in both towns, the teachers were quite familiar with one another, having met several times before in locally organised in-service workshops or at the end-of-course examination marking centre, it was easy for them to work together. However, the process of developing my own non-threatening relationship with them involved a number of socialisation strategies that I will describe in chapter seven (see 7.2) since this process determined, to some extent, the nature of the data collected for research question three.

The workshops took place over a period of two days covering a duration of 8 hours per day interspersed with 2 coffee breaks and lunch. On the first day the teachers of each town watched and appraised 4 lessons and on the second day, they appraised 3 lessons before a general discussion that focused on their perspectives on the experience of

participating in this research workshop and their responses to MoE methodology and training (see appendix 6 for focus group discussion timetables). Concretely, workshop discussion data was elicited as follows:

- Before watching video, researcher provides information about the particularities of each class: age range, linguistic background, number-on-roll, available materials, time of lesson etc.
- Participants watch a videoed lesson
- After each video, participants discuss positive/good aspects of the lesson in groups of five and each group presents their ideas in plenary
- Researcher asks probing questions on issues emanating from plenary feedback
- Researcher explicitly or implicitly refers to child-group interview and SR data to generate further discussion about each lesson.
- Researcher encourages participants to make comparisons across the different lessons.
- Participants share their own stories of successful language lessons as well as talk about their reaction to ministry policies regarding ELT.
- Participants share and also write their individual impressions about the process and product of the workshop.
- Three volunteers in each site write a report of the workshop deliberations which is photocopied and distributed to all workshop participants, the 7 cases, the researcher, and local authorities.

3.3.5.3.2. Dynamics of focus groups: Pupils

The growing impetus for a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogic practices entails giving an important place to the perspectives of learners in educational

research (Scott 2008; Pinter 2011; Kuchah & Pinter 2012). This means that in conducting research with children, it is important that they are seen as ‘strong, resourceful’ individuals who can work with adults towards solving problems and generating new ideas (Alderson, 2005) that can help us better understand the relationship between teaching processes and input on the one hand and the learning processes involving intake and output on the other hand. Because there are important ethical issues involved in adult encounters with children (Lewis, 1992; Pinter 2011), I considered and was guided by, amongst other things, the following questions, the answers to which explain the organisation and conduct of data collection with children:

- a) **How will I present myself to the children?** Before I arrived, pupils had already been informed that I was an inspector, so I could not conceal this. My initial introduction, interaction and relationship development with the children as whole classes has already been discussed in 3.1.1 above. However, with regard to the research participants, I needed to explain that I was also a teacher trainer and that my research was to find out what children thought were good or bad ways of teaching so that I could use their ideas to train other teachers in the future. I would think that the fact that children saw me as a friend who had some authority over their teachers coupled with the fact that I spent the recreational periods playing or just chatting with them, was important in establishing confidence and a favourable interview atmosphere. Yet, in the course of the interview, my purpose and the confidentiality of their responses were reiterated in different ways, to sustain their confidence.
- b) **When will the interviews take place?** All the interviews took place either late in the afternoon after classes or on Saturday mornings after remedial lessons. The decision was arrived at after discussion with pupils and subsequently with their

teacher and depended on the approval of parents through the consent forms sent to them.

- c) **Where will the research data be collected?** Dockrell, Lewis & Lindsay (2000) identify two types of settings – natural and formal/artificial – for conducting interviews with children each of which has its advantages and disadvantages. In the context of this study, I opted for a natural setting but considering the fact that children may be concerned that information revealed in a natural setting may be fed back to teachers or peers (Dockrell, et al., 2000) I encouraged each group of pupils to decide within one to two days where they wanted our ‘conversation’ to take place (Irwin & Johnson 2005). In Yaounde, all the groups agreed to have the interviews in a different classroom from their regular classroom. One reason for this choice could be the fact that schools in Yaounde have space restrictions so that one playground, for example is often used by a group of schools. As for their choice of other classrooms, it was neither possible nor necessary for me to obtain any other information. In Buea, on the other hand, 5 of the 6 groups of children chose to be interviewed on the playground (football field) while one group of girls preferred their classroom.
- d) **How many children will I interview at a time?** Two considerations guided my decision of how many pupils were to constitute a group: previous research and my trial group interviews. The diverse numbers of group members in previous research (e.g. Breakwell, 1990, maximum of 6-7 participants; Denscombe, 2003, 6-9 participants; Morgan & Spanish, 1985, 4-5 participants; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994, 4-8 participants; Kitzinger, 1995, 3-10 participants) all suggest that large groups are difficult to manage. In my first trialling in two separate classes, I worked with a mixed group of 10 pupils and the experiences (see appendix 8)

influenced my decision to conduct the group interviews with two groups of 5 boys and 5 girls in each class.

- e) **How long will the interview last?** It was not possible to determine beforehand the length of each interview session as this depended more on the responses of the children. However, considering that most of the interviews were done after school when children could be tired, I tried to limit the interview duration to between 30 and 60 minutes albeit allowing for possibilities of extension as the enthusiasm of the children dictated.
- f) **What language are we going to use?** The need to use a language familiar to participants, especially children participants in research has been variously discussed by researchers (e.g. Lewis, 1992; Pinter, 2011). However, in the context of this study, other factors including what Esch (2010) refers to as ‘epistemic injustices’ in the language situation in Cameroon impose French and English on teachers and consequently on learners, as the only ‘educated’ languages. Consequently, in spite of my encouragement for learners to use one of the three languages we were mutually familiar with – French, English or Pidgin – they mostly insisted in using English. Because of my encouragement, however, some of the children in Yaounde occasionally shifted from English to French.
- g) **How will I ensure that data collected is subject (English language) specific?**
One difficulty with conducting interviews about teachers’ practices in a context where primary school teachers are general subject teachers is the fact that children tend to focus either on the teaching of their best subjects or on overall practice of the teacher. To minimise such a possibility and to ensure that the information they provided was, as much as possible, related to English language teaching, I did two things. First was that as much as possible, I visited each class

only during the English language lessons and second, I asked each of them before the interview to select their best English lesson and talk to us about why they enjoyed the lesson during the interview (See appendix 3). In this way, I used their selected English lessons, amongst other things presented in chapter four, as a starting point for the interviews.

h) **What activities will I use to facilitate the discussions?** Child researchers (e.g. Alderson, 2005; Pinter, 2011) have recommended participatory approaches to facilitating group interviews with children. Participatory methods may include the use of drawings, maps, flow diagrams, play, drama, stories or songs. Participatory research gives children agency and some control over the research agenda, and it emphasises the importance of understanding issues from the children's point of view (O'Kane, 2008). For this study, data was collected through:

- Asking students to draw their English teacher and write something he/she always says as a basis for further discussion (see appendix 2);
- Asking about students' best lessons and how they were taught;
- Talking about what they like/dislike about the practices of their current teacher;
- Talking about their best ever teacher in primary school;
- Asking them for advice on what a good English teacher should/should not do;
- Asking them to say what they will do if they were teaching an English lesson;
- Completing the sentence 'I enjoy my English lesson when my teacher....';

- Writing a ‘private’ letter to me saying what they like or dislike about their English teacher (see appendix 2).

The private letters were written at home and handed to me the next day; they enabled me look for information that might not have emerged from the group discussion.

- i) **What aspects of children’s opinions will be taken into consideration in shaping the rest of the research process?** As these interviews were conducted prior to formal observation and Stimulated recalls, I was open to the possibility that children’s agendas could be different from those of the adults I had contacted. For this reason, I had made up my mind to focus on the positives of their teachers, but not to do anything that would inhibit the interviews. It is this flexibility on my part and the confidence hitherto established between us that encouraged the children to talk about even the negatives of their teachers. In one of the schools in Yaoundé, the children unanimously challenged my perceptions of their teacher and proved to me beyond doubt that the teacher selected for my study was not a good teacher by their judgement. Following recommendations in the literature that an effective strategy for building good rapport with children is to react to the children and follow their guidelines (Cosaro 1997; Punch 2002a; 2002b), I therefore agreed to include this teacher’s colleague, recommended by the children and as such brought my total number of cases to 7 teachers. In Buea, the same situation occurred in one school, but this was due to the fact that the teacher selected for the study (Grace) was found by the children to be better in

teaching mathematics than English. Unfortunately despite all my efforts Grace's colleague was unwilling to take part.

3.3.6. Validity and reliability of instruments

Validity and reliability form an essential condition for establishing the truthfulness and wider credibility of research findings (Neuman, 2000). The discussion of validity and reliability in this study builds around the ontological stance that there is no objective universal truth, but rather, the possibility of specific local, personal, and community forms of truth, with focus on daily life and local narratives (Rosenau, 1992) which narratives and the perspectives revealed therein, emphasise the heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge (Kvale, 1996). Validity, as such, is seen in this study not as an absolutely attainable state in qualitative research, but as a matter of degree (Gronlund, 1981; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007) to be maximised by the researcher. According to Cohen et al. (2007) the validity of qualitative data can be addressed through its honesty, depth, richness and scope as well as through the extent of triangulation, the objectivity of the researcher and the role of the participant. In terms of the extent of triangulation, this study makes use of multiple data collection instruments as well as multiple perspectives (from the individual Cases, groups of teachers and learners) to investigate the phenomena under study, obtaining as such, a rich and wide scope of information. The use of interviews allowed me probe into participants' beliefs and practices and thus ensure the depth of the data collected. Detailed descriptions of parts of classroom events as well as excerpts of data transcripts have also been provided in the analysis and the appendices to enable other researchers and readers assess the veracity, and transferability of the procedure and/or findings of this study to other cases, phenomena or contexts (Cohen et al., 2007).

Following Cohen et al. (2007) the validity of this study was enhanced at different stages. At the design stage, I selected an appropriate methodology and instrumentation – namely, observation field notes, SR and focus group interviews/discussions – for answering the research questions. What is more, in my administration of these instruments, I avoided using guiding questions that will influence responses and thus falsify the data obtained. At the level of sampling, I selected research participants who met contextually defined criteria for good teachers but also verified with peers and with learners that the practices of these teachers were consistent with what they considered appropriate pedagogy in their specific contexts. The fact that all encounters between researcher and participants took place in either the natural settings of the participants or – as in the case of focus group discussions with teachers – in places chosen by them or with their consent helped minimise reactivity effects (Cohen et al., 2007) a situation where respondents behave differently because they are placed in new situations. Besides, because participants were initially motivated by the claim that they had been selected as good, experienced professionals coupled with the researcher's general proactive and empowering approach to teaching and teacher training (see prologue and also Kuchah, 2008), it was possible to obtain data that was directly related to the objectives of the study, rich in detail and trustworthy.

Kumar (2005) posits that it is not possible to obtain 100 per cent reliability in social science research because factors such as the wordings of questions, the physical settings of interviews or encounters, the respondent's mood and the nature of interaction may influence the data collected and its subsequent analysis. Because in qualitative research, reliability entails 'fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity,

comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents (Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 145-46), special attention was given, in this study to establishing consistent patterns of relationships across each group of participants, working within their natural settings and talking to them in the discourse they were familiar with. This was made possible by my own experience working at this level of education as a teacher for about 14 years as well as my awareness of the linguistic and cultural factors that may be conveyed both in verbal and non verbal communication (Ryen, 2001).

3.3.7. Resolving field issues & storing data

3.3.7.1. Trialling

Trialling of the research instruments was carried out with teachers and learners who shared all or some of the same characteristics in terms of level of teaching/learning, teaching experience, linguistic backgrounds, and classroom size, with the participants in this study. Three of the four research instruments, namely observation, stimulated recall and child-group interviews, were trialled (see appendix 8 for details of the trialling). There was no need for me to trial the focus group interviews with teachers since, apart from the use of video, the procedure constituted the essential part of my job as well as the teacher's training culture.

3.3.7.2. Data storage

The data for this study was collected through the use of audio and visual equipment like Dictaphones and a video camera. To safeguard the data, I burnt the audio and video files into DVDs which were safely stored in my home cupboard. I also uploaded some of the audio files onto my Warwick space as well as in my home computer and laptop. In this

way, I was able to retrieve any information I wanted at all times. However, two of the children's group interviews could not be used because of the noise level that made transcription difficult. In terms of securing the data, all uploaded electronic files were password protected, and DVDs kept in a locked cupboard.

3.4. Ethical issues, dilemmas and considerations

Because case study research demands close and prolonged contact with participants it is important for the researcher to ensure that participants are treated with respect and in ways that do not influence data collection and analysis. Thereof arises the need for ethical considerations. Given the significant differences between the ethical demands of UK research and the cultural/political determinants of interpersonal relationships (cf. Shamim & Qureshi 2013), as well as my close and fairly extended involvement with the research participants of this study, there was a need, not only to take preventive actions to eliminate eventual risks to both participants and researcher, but also to approach fieldwork with honesty, consideration for participants' needs and concerns as well as the flexibility required to handle emerging dilemmas. I discuss the ethical measures taken in this research under the headings below, showing in each case how ethical dilemmas were dealt with:

3.4.1. Respect for participants' rights and dignity

One of the selection criteria for participants in this study was their willingness to participate in the study. I therefore negotiated entry into classrooms with each teacher to be sure that I was not imposing my authority as an inspector on them. In addition to maintaining cordial communication with participants while still in the UK, I clearly explained the purpose of my study to them highlighting the fact that they were selected

as good teachers. This, in addition to allowing them the right to withdraw from the study whenever they wanted, I hope, provided the self-esteem and respect they deserved. I also negotiated entry approval from local school authorities who have the responsibility over children in school. Although by virtue of my position in the Ministry of Basic Education I had the right to direct access to schools and learners, I made sure that school administration and teachers approved of this. I also sought approval from parents through the Head teachers, to video and interview their children, but also selected only pupils who were happy to be interviewed. As much as possible, interviews with pupil-groups were in the form of 'friendly' conversations in a discourse most convenient to the pupils and I did not pursue any area pupils were unwilling to discuss. I avoided any references to religion or other cultural/tribal stereotypes I am aware of, and as much as possible, focused on classroom and school experience.

However, an important dilemma emanating from the content of my interviews with the children needs to be raised here. In all child interviews, it was revealed that teachers administer corporal punishment on the children to varying extents. School legislation in Cameroon proscribes corporal punishment, but it was clear – in spite of the different degrees of resentment expressed by different groups of children - that some of the teachers were still physically punishing them. While it was important that I protect the rights and dignity of the children by notifying administration, it was also important that I maintain the confidentiality of my interviews with children from their teachers who were likely to reproach them when I was gone. In some of the schools, I raised this with the head teacher, but in one school where it was clear to me that the teacher involved was the head teacher's favourite assistant, I feared that the head teacher might reveal the children's secret with me, to their teacher. In fact a parent had, before signing the

consent form, expressed this fear. To resolve the matter, I informed the regional inspectors and we agreed that they were going to find a way of dealing with the issue without giving the impression that it emerged from my interview with the children. As a pedagogic authority with the power to deal with this directly, my role as a researcher and the demands of that role in a way imposed on me a line of action that did not directly and immediately help the situation. The consequence is that such instances of violence on children which, I must say, are not isolated cases, continue to permeate an educational system that claims to proscribe corporal punishment, while the researcher/inspector is, hampered by ethical prescriptions, unable directly to help.

3.4.2. Establishing and maintaining rapport

Kvale (1996) suggests that the researcher must establish an atmosphere in which the participant feels safe enough to talk freely about his or her experiences. The ability of the researcher to develop trust and rapport and establish relationships with interviewees facilitates valid data collection. The researcher's challenge therefore is to ensure staying in the field and keeping the good relations already established acceptable to those being studied (Ryen, 2001). While it was fairly easy for me to develop rapport with participants through the process I have variously described above, maintaining this relationship posed a number of dilemmas. Haimes (2002) has suggested that 'if we are to understand more clearly how individuals "act ethically" we have to engage in the detailed, contextualised dilemmas' (p. 105). My first dilemma was the fact that teachers are very used to receiving feedback on their lessons each time they are observed, and as a result, expected me to comment on their lessons. My refusal to comment might have caused suspicion on the part of my teachers and in a way affected their communication with me. On the other hand, commenting would have influenced the way they presented

subsequent lessons as they would have prepared lessons to satisfy my expectations. I however managed to avoid such a situation by promising to give feedback at the end of my stay and also to share with them the opinions raised in the subsequent focus group discussion with other teachers. The second dilemma, related to the first came from the expectation that after a period of observation, I was going to train the teachers on 'better' ways of teaching as is the tradition. The teachers, head teachers and other local authorities insisted that I organise a training workshop with all teachers before returning to the UK. As this was not possible both for time and ethical reasons, I promised to organise a workshop during my second visit to Cameroon. It was not until after my focus group interviews with teachers where together, we identified areas for training that I was able to organise one-day workshops in teaching and assessing literacy skills in both towns. The third dilemma had to do with local norms of socialisation in Buea, where the teachers were less familiar with me than those in Yaounde: because of my prolonged stay in each town, teachers constantly invited me out for a drink in the evening. This is a tricky situation that can add to the complexities and vicissitudes of research encounters especially in a social context where, because of my role in the ministry and the fact that I was coming from the UK, I was expected to always buy drinks for each participant including other friends who may accompany him/her. On the one hand, acceptance of the many invitations would not only have ruined me financially, but created a familiarity that might affect my research. On the other hand, refusal was likely to be interpreted as patronising or stingy and as such cause reluctance on the part of my respondents to collaborate. To resolve this dilemma, I did arrange, with the help of the regional inspector who assisted me in Buea, two evenings out, the first with all the three teachers in Buea and their head teachers and the second only with the teachers. Both evenings were known to have been sponsored by the inspector who pretended to

turn down all my offers to pay for the drinks although in reality I had provided the money with which she paid the bills. In the first evening, we chatted about the educational system and administrative challenges and I encouraged the head teachers to share with all present how they and their colleagues solved some of the challenges. In the second evening which was more informal because of the absence of the head teachers, we chatted about football and other social realities, and as much as possible, I avoided talking about the research.

3.4.3. Obtaining informed consent

Consent from gatekeepers at Ministry and regional delegations of Basic Education as well as district inspectors and head teachers of the selected schools was obtained verbally because my position as National Pedagogic Inspector gives me free access to schools. However, and in spite of my administrative right of access to schools, I negotiated entry into schools first with head teachers who had helped me in the teacher selection process and further to this, negotiated access to classrooms from the teachers themselves. Contact with teachers started while I was still in the UK and I explained clearly the purpose and procedure (both in terms of research and ethics) of the study and their right to withdraw at anytime. Once I obtained verbal consent from them, I also requested on my arrival in their schools, that they each sign a consent form but this request was met with reluctance, suspicion and even resistance from some teachers. Ryen (2004) and Shamim & Qureshi (2013) have noted that the general ethical correctness of informed consent irrespective of the location of the field may be questionable with reference to the North-South dimension in Third World projects. Written informed consent, Ryen (op cit) argues

...may be seen as a token of the bureaucratization of Western societies with its institutionalization of trust into formal bodies of organization, written documentation and well-organised filing systems. In oral societies, an invitation to sign formal documents may work as an unintended device to accentuate existing differences rather than building relations in cross-cultural settings. It may lead to alienation; it may enforce scepticism (p.232)

To resolve the dilemma, I did not insist on these teachers signing the consent form but proceeded with the research without their signed consent. On return to the UK, I continued communication with them on the phone and eventually convinced them to sign the forms after explaining to them that my research was being rejected because of the absence of evidence that they had agreed to my using their data. They eventually signed the consent forms when I returned to Cameroon for the second phase of my research not, I would say, because it was socially correct, but because of sympathy for me.

As far as pupil participants are concerned, consent was first sought from the head teacher and classroom teacher. However, I also discussed this with each pupil and only interviewed those who agreed. After obtaining the children's verbal consent, I also, with the head teachers' help sought parents' informed consent so that parents signed the forms because they were given to them by the head teacher (see appendix 10), not by me. In spite of this, a parent of one of the children who took part in the focus group interview in Yaoundé expressed fear that I will betray her daughter to the teacher and only signed the consent form when the head teacher assured her of the confidentiality of the data collected. This expression of fear was very evident in the initial attitude of the child during the interview and it took extra convincing and the encouraging outspokenness of her peers before she could talk about her teacher.

3.4.4. Privacy and Confidentiality

All data collected from participants as well as all other information related to my thesis was uploaded to my Warwick 'H' drive and also saved as a password protected file in my personal laptop in order to prevent third parties from accessing it. I bought notebooks for observation and identified them with names of colours meant to represent each of the teachers to be observed. These notebooks were kept in a locked drawer in my room. As my study involved travelling to different places, the colours were meant to hide the real identity of each participant in case a third party got hold of a notebook. As much as possible, I did not share information from one participant, with another. However, for my focus group discussion, I obtained the consent of the 7 primary participants and parents of pupils for their lessons to be viewed by other teachers and made sure that I transmitted the positive feedback from colleagues to each of the teachers whose lessons were viewed.

In my analysis, I have neither used the real names of any of my participants nor have I used the true names of the schools. I have assigned the following pseudonyms to the cases: Kingsley, Ivo, George and Martha in Yaounde and Josephine, Grace and Alberto in Buea. The child participants from each of their classes have also been assigned the same pseudonyms as their teachers and numbered according to their gender. For example the first boy from Josephine's class is called JosephineB1 while the first girl is called JosephineG1. As Kingsley and Ivo teach the same students, their child-participants are named KinivoG or KinivoB for girls and boys respectively. In terms of the representation of focus group participants, it was difficult for me to moderate discussions and still keep track of which participant was talking at any point in the

discussion. As data was audio-recorded and only transcribed later, I decided to name all participants according to the research sites. So adult group participants are all called Yaounde or Buea and to indicate different speakers in a particular stretch of dialogue, I use numbers not to refer to any particular speaker but for the convenience of distinguishing between two or more interlocutors at a particular time in the discussions. Although I have ensured that the numbering of each speaker is consistent in individual samples of dialogue it is possible that Yaounde1, for example, in one stretch of dialogue may refer to a different person from Yaounde1 in another dialogue.

3.4.5. Ensuring honesty, fairness in reporting

To ensure fairness and honesty of my research, I provided my primary participants with transcriptions of their stimulated recall interviews for verification and confirmation of content. I also presented transcripts of workshop data to two willing participants in each of the two research sites but unfortunately none of them was able to find time to read all of the transcripts and responses from them showed that they agreed with the parts of the transcript they had read as far as they could remember. It was however not advisable for me to ask child-participants to read the transcripts of their interviews given the fact that being in an examination class, they had other pressures.

3.5. Data Analysis & Interpretation

The data collected for this study was analysed thematically. Thematic analysis was adopted for this study not only because I found it an appropriate linchpin to arriving at answers to the research questions through inductive analysis of the data, but also because it offered the advantages listed in table 6 below:

Table 7: Advantages of thematic analysis

-
- *Flexibility.*
 - *Relatively easy and quick method to learn, and do.*
 - *Accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research.*
 - *Results are generally accessible to educated general public.*
 - *Useful method for working within participatory research paradigm, with participants as collaborators.*
 - *Can usefully summarize key features of a large body of data, and/or offer a ‘thick description’ of the data set.*
 - *Can highlight similarities and differences across the data set.*
 - *Can generate unanticipated insights.*
 - *Allows for social as well as psychological interpretations of data.*
 - *Can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development.*
-

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

Data analysis and interpretation was conducted in line with the paradigmatic stance adopted in this study and following a combination of analytical considerations, techniques and procedures recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006), Attride-Stirling (2001), Aronson (1994) Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006), Kvale (1996) and Yin (2009). This underwent a number of phases from the initial transcription of data to the production of the final report. The key phases are briefly discussed below with the intention of throwing more light on the ‘how’ of the analysis and interpretation process.

3.5.1. Transcribing

Proponents of qualitative research (e.g. Kvale, 1996; Richards, 2003; Bird, 2005) argue that transcription norms vary from one study to another. This is because transcription is not simply the representation of oral language in written form; it also involves a degree of interpretation, decision-making and selection (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; David & Sutton, 2011) which is consistent with the research conventions adopted for each study (Cameron, D. 2001). In this study, I followed recommendation for a transcription guided by its ‘fitness for purpose, adequacy, and accuracy’ (Richards, 2003 p.199; and also

Edwards, 1993) but also tried to maintain certain features of the naturally occurring talk that were relevant to the analysis. The transcriptions took into consideration content words and as much as possible, avoided additions and omissions (Pavlenko, 2007). A further consideration in the transcription process was my understanding of the discourse of the participants and the semantic changes that have taken place in most of English speaking West Africa as a result of the new ecology – composed of a multitude of native languages, the predominance of Pidgin English as well as other languages for wider communication and, in the case of Cameroon, French – within which the English language is used (Anchimbe, 2006). In this respect, certain words used in the oral communications were directly translated into their semantic equivalence in English. Examples include participants' use of words like 'abuse' for 'insult'; 'stranger' for 'visitor'; 'dear' for 'expensive'; 'wild' for 'violent'; 'uncle' for 'older friend' or 'male nursery school teacher' (see Anchimbe, 2006 for an extensive list of such semantic changes and a discussion of the sources).

To ensure consistency and to familiarise myself with the data, I personally transcribed the entire data. In the process, I found it impossible to transcribe the group interviews of Alberto's and Martha's boys due to the very poor sound quality and high noise levels caused by the fact that the interviews were conducted in the playground during playtime and it was not possible to minimise noise levels. For this reason, the only data from these students is from their written accounts.

3.5.2. Data coding and identification of themes

Data coding was done in two phases: the first was after my first visit to Cameroon and the second was after the second visit. In the first phase, data from observation field

notes, stimulated recall and child-group interviews were coded to identify recurrent (semantic and latent) features. This was done separately for each case with the intention of gaining insights that would be used to generate discussions with a larger group of teachers in the second phase of the study. The codes which emerged from (my interaction with) the data were basic segments or elements of the raw data that could be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). For each data item, a table was created with two columns. The first column contained the raw data while the second contained the codes as well as comments arising from my interaction with the same or other data sets (see Appendix 5 for an example). These (with the exception of children's data) were shown to the teachers for verification and confirmation before the second phase of data collection. The second phase of data coding further refined the codes in line with data coding from the workshop group discussion with the larger group of teachers. These codes and comments helped me identify themes by relating to their essence but also, from a pragmatist perspective, to their recurrence within the data set (Kirk and Miller, 1986). To avoid any confusion emanating from too much data, I have based the presentation of findings on workshop discussion data and used data from my observation, stimulated recalls and workshop participants' feedback to further enrich findings.

Chapter Four

Findings (1): Learners' Perceptions of Good Teaching Practices

4.0. Introduction

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of this study is to investigate features of contextually appropriate ESL methodology in Cameroonian primary schools. This suggests that the study focuses on teachers and how they adjust their teaching to the socio-cultural realities of their context. Yet understanding that the purpose of all pedagogic activity is to facilitate and enhance learning should also point us in the direction of understanding learners' perceptions of what teachers do. The way I have ordered the presentation of findings for this study is in line with Holliday's (1994b) assertion that '...achieving an appropriate methodology depends on learning what happens between people in the classroom' (p.161) but is guided both by the chronology of my data collection and by the nature of the data itself which imposes the need to start with learners' perspectives of good practice before moving to teachers' perspectives of what is good and appropriate to their working context.

In the literature review, I argued for a bottom-up approach to researching pedagogy. In this study I attempt such a bottom-up approach to investigating, analysing, reporting and disseminating contextually appropriate pedagogy. Employing a bottom-up approach entails starting from the least consulted in this context (namely, learners) and moving up the ladder to teachers in a bid to inform decision makers of the reality of classroom experiences. Besides, apart from the fact that the research process enabled me to become more and more aware of the value of learners' perceptions in adding light to an understanding of teachers' practices (e.g. see how learners influenced me to include a

7th teacher in the study in section 3.3.3.1 above) the decision to start with children's perceptions also presents a picture of the bigger context within which teachers work since the teacher is just one amongst the many participants who make up the classroom context. What is more, apart from making up the majority of the people in the classroom, learners' wellbeing and development constitute the main purpose of 'what happens between [the] people in the classroom' (ibid) and in the context of this study, identifying their perspectives early was useful in generating discussions with adult (workshop) participants about good and appropriate teaching as will be seen in subsequent chapters.

This chapter therefore presents and analyses data collected from pupils in both research sites (Buea and Yaounde) about their perceptions of the practices of their teachers in English lessons. Drawing from pupils' own perspectives, it seeks to answer the first research question: What are Young learners' perceptions of good English language teaching practices? Rather than presenting data on a group-by-group basis I take an across-data approach to thematic analysis. This is because student participant perspectives were not only limited to their current teachers; they were able to talk about the good practices of their past and present teachers and as such expressed opinions that cannot be interpreted as applying entirely to one teacher. My focus is on what emerges from the entire data as positive features of teachers' practices although in representing students' perspectives, I take into consideration the fact that in the co-construction of these, reference was made to particular teachers and their practices. In line with my commitment to adopting an enhancement paradigm that examines the strengths, not the weakness of teachers' responses to their classroom contexts my main focus will be on

what learners perceive as good teaching practices and references to negative practices are only meant to provide deeper insights into what they would perceive as good.

Perceptions of good practice were therefore elicited through various participatory activities involving students talking about their drawings of their teachers, their best English lessons; their best ever English teachers as well as giving advice about how to teach English and a sentence completion activity (see 3.3.5.3.2h).

In the following sections, I use thematic analysis of the child-group interview as well as my observation notes as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Judging from the whole data from all 12 groups of pupils (i.e. two groups – boys and girls respectively - from all six schools), thematic areas emerging from the perceptions and perspectives of students about good ELT practices can broadly be classified under four main categories (see table7 below), namely affective, instrumental, and procedural as well as language and meta-language factors that influence their learning.

Table 8: Summary of students' perceptions of good teaching

Codes	Themes	Categories
making Ss laugh/saying funny things and doing funny actions	Teacher's sense of humour	Affective factors
greeting Ss and accepting Ss greetings/not being angry/not using abusive language/ caring for Ss personal needs/welfare and safety, e.g. checking their personal hygiene/advising Ss	Friendly/parental attitude	
Praising Ss for successful and unsuccessful attempts/thanking Ss for asking questions/ asking class to clap for Ss/acknowledging Ss efforts	Appreciative feedback	
Telling Ss which sections to prepare for exams/scoring high marks in practice exercises/focusing on skills for passing exams e.g spelling & verbs.	Goal-oriented pedagogy	Instrumental factors

Making action while explaining/using students to demonstrate/making Ss understand by 'explaining again'	Explanations and demonstrations	Language teaching practices/ activities
Giving context-familiar examples/using Ss lived experiences as examples, e.g talking about the harvesting season/using realia	Exemplification & personalisation	
Asking pupils questions & encouraging them to ask questions/checking understanding or monitoring learning through questions/ challenging Ss to find answers to the questions of their peers/ providing practice exercises/ giving corrective feedback	Questioning and feedback	
Encouraging Ss to perform traditional teacher roles like going to the board to explain, modify, correct/encouraging Ss to do research through homework & practice exercises/holding back parts of knowledge for Ss to find out/assigning specific tasks to specific pupils, e.g weekly dictionary work/ eliciting pupils' opinions in developing lesson procedure	Sharing responsibility	
Learning from peers/encouraging group work/	Collaborative learning	
T uses songs, rhymes and stories and encourages Ss to explore language from these, e.g identifying irregular verbs from song or prepositions from rhyme or simple past tense from stories/using narratives for reading comprehension	Use of creative activities	
T speaks good English/is good at teaching pronunciation, sounds, spellings & spellings	Language content knowledge	Language content knowledge

4.1. Affective factors

My major interest during the group interviews was to find out which pedagogic practices resonated positively with students' learning experiences but as students tended to refer to affective factors, it was important for me to first seek to understand their affective orientations so as to be able to elicit features of their favourite teachers' methodological practices from them. The nature of the affective relationship between teachers and learners emerged as the overriding factor in determining good teaching in the sense that it was generally when students liked a teacher that they were able to describe with some degree of detail how that teacher carried out his/her practice. In the same way, their love

for particular lessons and for particular teachers were so interwoven that it was difficult for me to separate these in the interview process. In an interview with George's girls for example GeorgeG4 explained that she loved English language because she understood the teacher well. When I asked if that will be the case if the teacher was changed, she said: *'But if they change the teacher and the teacher is wicked, I will have problems with English.'* A 'wicked' teacher was seen as one who was unwelcoming and aggressive towards students and who punished them all the time. The excerpt below represents how students are unable to talk about Kingsley's pedagogic practices because of negative affective factors:

Harry: *Okay let us talk about your teacher, I know he teaches you many other subjects, but I want us to talk about English lessons.*

KinivoG1: *It will be difficult to talk about him.*

Harry: *It will be difficult to talk about him?*

KinivoG1: *Yes, to me*

Harry: *Why is it difficult?*

KinivoG1: *Because if you see him, you can run and reach Bamenda. (General laughter) I'm not lying, I'm really am serious. (laughter continues with occasional 'yes', 'yes' from the other children) I am taking an example. If a child from another school just...if he's walking around the road then if that child smashes him, ayaya (!) it will be catastrophic. He will run and reach even the European aeroport (more laughter). He gets very angry very fast, a small thing and he will be very angry.*

Harry: *Really?*

KinivoG1: *Like the first day of school, when we just came back [from holidays] he was very angry with me and Shirley, I don't know why. So it will be very difficult to talk about him because if I want to talk about him it will only be things that are not good. So I don't think that he can change, because if I say that he can change it will be something I cannot tell anybody.*

Elsewhere in Buea and Yaoundé, students talked about previous bad teachers raising problems like teachers beating and insulting them all the time, not explaining lessons well to them and not paying attention to their personal difficulties. Whenever I refocused the discussion on the pedagogic practices of the particular teachers, all they said was that the teacher *'did not explain well'* and were unable to talk about any of the teacher's

practices except those that reflected negative attitudes towards them. One example is that in talking about their best English lesson, KinivoG3 initially described a lesson taught by Kingsley. However, in her commentary she was unable to say anything positive about this lesson, even though I was trying to elicit positive practices. The other children could not comment positively about Kingsley's lessons either. After long moments of hesitation KinivoG3 finally said: *'This was not my best lesson'*. On the contrary, when they talked about a favourite former or current teacher, they were able to describe the lesson procedure and identify practical teaching strategies that the particular teacher used. KinivoG3 was later able, for example, to describe her best lesson taught by Ivo more clearly:

Harry: *I will start again with KinivoG3.*

KinivoG3: *My best English lesson is 'polite expressions'.*

Harry: *Good. What are the things your teacher did, which made you to like the lesson?*

KinivoG3: *He first of all made us to laugh a bit, when we were going to the table. Then he asked us our opinions so that he can take some and write on the board and make us to laugh.*

Harry: *What did he do to make you laugh?*

KinivoG3: *He started...when he asked a question and then a girl never stood up very well, so he told the girl to stand up very well. He made us to laugh by walking and bending his back because the girl never wanted to stand straight. He said that if you don't know how to stand straight, when you grow old you will be walking like that. And then he said he did not want that we will start walking like that, so we must stand up straight. And also when he is teaching, he wants everybody to understand. If you don't understand, you put your hand up and ask him a question. Anytime he finish teaching a lesson, he must give an exercise to see whether everybody has understood what he has taught.*

In the same group of students, once we had established that the discussions were not only limited to Kingsley's lessons and that they were free to talk about a lesson taught by Mr Ivo (their preferred teacher) even the very reserved KinivoG4 was able to describe a lesson with a degree of detail:

It was very good. He started the lesson by asking us to sing a song, then he asked us to make any sentence, then he wrote our sentences on the blackboard

with our names. After, he asked us to tell somebody what everybody said. Then he asked us what we have changed from the original sentence when we tell somebody. He asked us many questions and explained very well to us, then he gave us an exercise and we did the exercise and we exchanged our books and marked the exercise and everybody had at least 7 over 10. He asked us to clap for ourselves (KinivoG4).

This vivid description of a lesson procedure which contrasts sharply with the equally vivid description, by KinovoG1 above of her teacher's behaviour seems to be facilitated by the fact that these students are affectively attached to the second teacher.

In Grace's class for example, the children identified a former class four teacher who had now gone to further her education in Yaoundé as their best teacher ever. To them, she was a very good teacher because:

GraceB1: *She teaches very well*

GraceB3: *When she teaches, she will make sure that everybody understand when she is teaching; she will repeat many times.*

GraceB2: *She always told us stories in class; she will call us together and she will ask someone to tell a story*

GraceB1: *She tells stories and also ask us to tell stories; then she ask us questions about the story and then she ask us to identify verbs and nouns and pronouns in the story*

Harry: *Is it the stories that you liked or the verbs and nouns?*

GraceB5: *Because if the story is interesting we will understand the grammar lesson too very easily and she used to give us many exercises to do.*

In addition to being able to describe the practices of their favourite teachers, students tended to ignore the same factors that they hated about their worst teachers. From the data, it was clear that all the 7 cases in this study administered some amount of corporal punishment on students. Yet, when students referred to this in the case of teachers they liked, it did not seem to constitute a problem for them:

Harry: *What do you expect a good teacher to do?*

GraceG3: *To love their children*

Harry: *And how do you show love for your children?*

GraceG1: *He should not be beating the children at all times.*

GraceG5: *He should be smiling and not beating them all the time*

Harry: *Does that mean he can beat them sometimes?*

All: *Yes*

Harry: *Like when?*

Different voices: *When they are stubborn; when they disturb; when they do stupid things.*

GraceG4: *He should not insult children.*

In some cases, corporal punishment was seen as positively influencing memory like in the example below from George's student which was also shared by Josephine's and Alberto's students in Buea:

When he teach us nouns, let us take the example of nouns. The next morning, he will ask us questions but if we don't know, he will beat us and then we will remember the answer. It seems as if he puts the answer in the cane. (GeorgeB5)

The forgoing excerpt suggests that although students dislike teachers who punish them, they tend to tolerate punishment from teachers they see as genuinely concerned about their learning and success. The discussion above illustrates the fact that rapport building constitutes an important factor in teaching young learners. It is through building positive relationships with learners that teachers' practices can be better perceived and appreciated by learners. Negative relationships tend to orientate learners' towards behavioural factors and as a consequence, may affect the way they perceive the learning experience.

4.1.1. Positive affective factors

A number of rapport building practices on the part of the teachers accounted for their likeability; these included their sense of humour, parental attitude and positive reward.

4.1.1.1. Teacher's sense of humour

Children generally expressed love for teachers who made them laugh by introducing play and fun in the classroom. Statements like: *'The thing I like is that when she teaches us, she makes fun'* (GraceG5); *'I like her because she makes fun when she is teaching'* (JosephineG1); *'He was joking with us. He likes to play with us'* (GeorgeG3); *'She is very funny; she tells us funny things that make us to laugh and remember the lesson'* (MarthaG1) are all indications of how children appreciate teachers who display a sense of humour in the classroom. Students recounted humorous anecdotes from their different classes with excitement. An example of humour with a pedagogic relevance was drawn from Ivo's lesson on verbs:

KinivoG5: *When he was teaching, he was making that we should laugh. When he is saying something, he is doing the action. He makes that we should understand well.*

Harry: *Is it because of the action that you understand well?*

All: *Yes sir*

Harry: *Which action, for example did he do that you can remember from this lesson?*

KinivoG5: *He was making as if he is a football player...*

KinivoG4: *He was dribbling and kicking the air and jumping like a mad man [general laughter]*

Here, the students are able to remember in detail, the actions of their teacher as well as the lesson itself because of the humorous nature of the actions associated with the lesson. Although most of the fun they referred to was clearly not of any immediately perceivable pedagogic value, children still thought that fun in the class was a vital factor for making learning enjoyable and memorable. One of George's students quoted some of his funny sayings provoking a lot of laughter in the group: *'When I teach you, you go home and put your books under the mattresses and tomorrow you come here with empty heads.'* In other groups, students were even able to recall things that their favourite previous teachers had said that made them laugh. Talking about a teacher who taught

them 2 years ago, GraceB4 recounted how after they had finished doing an exercise and students with top marks had been identified and praised, the teacher said top students would:

...grow up to be big people and drive big cars. At that time, she will be very old and using a walking stick. The big people will stop to greet her and she will be happy and say 'Well done my son' but those who keep failing will meet her and say 'I am just from prison'; some will not even greet her because they'll say she is too old or they will not even remember her.' (GraceB4)

The excitement with which this story was recounted and the accompanying excitement from other students revealed a sense of satisfaction with their point about the value of humour in establishing a good relationship with the students and consequently an enabling atmosphere favourable for learning.

However, the children could see a difference between humour that enhanced learning and humour that impeded learning. George's students for example acknowledged the positive affective value of their teacher's sense of humour, but agreed that sometimes it was distractive:

GeorgeG2: [...] when he will give an exercise he will start to play with children, then he will say "stop" when they have not finished. I think he should not be over playing.

[...]

GeorgeG5: He used to distract us, he used to tell us funny things and when we are laughing he will say "Time is passing oh". Then when we fail, he will punish us although he is the one who was disturbing.

They could also tell the difference between a teacher who naturally had a sense of humour and one who used humour as a way of veiling aggressiveness:

Harry: So if I understand you very well the kind of teacher you like is one who is very funny, who makes you laugh? Is that true?

[Silence]

Harry: But that is what you've all been saying.

KinivoG1: No.

Harry: *So what are the things you want a good teacher to do?*

KinivoG1: *Me, I don't like a teacher who will make us laugh when he will beat us after.*

KinivoG4: *He should always be happy and he should make us happy.*

4.1.1.2. Friendly/parental Attitude

Child-participants also expressed the opinion that a good teacher has to display a friendly and parental attitude towards them; this involved things like greeting and responding to students' greetings, caring for their personal needs and welfare. In Buea, for example students said they liked it when '*[Alberto] sees you on the road and even if you have not seen him, he will call your name and ask you 'how are you?'*' (AlbertoG3). This excerpt contrasted that from Kingsley's students who felt that '*when you greet him, sometimes it is as if you have made him to be angry [...] he will ask you 'what is good about the morning?'*' (KinivoB2). As KinivoG4 pointed out, this was an attitude they did not want: '*I think that I don't want that [Kingsley] should be anytime angry. I want that when they greet him, he should answer.*' Teachers who responded to students' greetings were seen as approachable:

If you greet her and she does not answer, you will be afraid to say anything even in class, but [...] when you greet her [Josephine], she will answer and smile with you and she will ask you if you are okay [...] then you will be happy to talk with her because she will not shout at you.' (JosephineB3.)

Apart from focusing on greetings and responses to greetings, students recounted instances of good teacher behaviour that showed parental attitudes towards them. They particularly emphasised the fact that a good teacher was one who cared for their personal needs, welfare and success. As I have explained earlier, one of the stimuli for child-group discussions was to draw their teacher's picture and write something memorable that he/she says (or has said) in class. As only one of Kingsley's boys had drawn a picture of their teacher, I asked each of them to tell me what they would have written

about their two teachers had they had time to draw a picture of them and the outcome of this shows how children responded to teacher attitudes towards them:

Harry: *And if I ask you people to draw [Kingsley], and write something he says that you remember, what would you write?*

KinivoB1: *Me I will write that, 'If you don't stop noise, you will smell a dead rat' [general laughter]*

KinivoB4: *I will write, 'Stop noise you dragon.'*

[...]

KinivoB2: *That 'If you don't do your homework, you will have it hot'*

Harry: *Okay, if I asked you to draw [Ivo] and write something, what will you write?*

KinivoB1: *I will write that 'Do your homework and reason well before doing it.*

[...]

KinivoB4: *I will write that 'If you don't understand something, ask me. If you understand, good and fine'.*

[...]

KinivoB2: *I will write that 'before the day of your exams you people should learn well and understand everything. Ask your elder brothers and sisters and even your friends to explain to you what you don't understand. If they cannot explain to you, bring it to me and we will all try to solve it.*

[...]

KinivoB5: *I will write that 'Do your homework and exercises well; if there are some exercises that you don't understand, bring it to class. If you have a home teacher, show him and if it is correct, he should mark it.*

The excerpt above reveals fundamental differences in the way students perceived both teachers and explains why they preferred one over the other. While Kingsley is presented as aggressive, using abusive and threatening language, Ivo is seen as a helpful counsellor who is interested in their success, giving them the opportunity to seek advice from their elder brothers and home teachers or to come to him if they need help. In the girl group interview students talked about how both teachers organised remedial classes for them during weekends; Kingsley would use video projections and charge a fee whereas Ivo would be more concerned about their safety in going to school over the weekend:

KinivoG1: *...if it is Mr Ivo [...] he will say that, just come like that [i.e., without a fee], just come like that, but the only thing he will say is that 'don't come with*

your dresses' that's all. He will not say again anything. Don't come with your dresses, you must...

ALL: *.come with your uniform*

KinivoG1: *...because he doesn't want that they say that a child of Class six in [name of school] has fallen or has collapsed and the child is wearing any kind of dress that they cannot identify him, he will not accept.*

From the foregoing excerpt, it is clear that the children preferred Ivo because he was genuinely concerned about their wellbeing and safety; he wanted them to come to school in uniforms so that if anything went wrong with any of them, it will be easy to identify them. In Yaounde and Buea, students recounted incidents in which their teacher had shown concern for their wellbeing. George's and Josephine's students told stories of how their teachers had visited them or their peers in hospital when they were ill and how they had liked the fact that their teacher was 'kind' to them. One of Josephine's boys recounted a very personal story of his family difficulties and how his teacher had been very helpful:

She always call me and my sister and talk to us to not worry about anything that she will help us to stay in school and to study well. Last year when I failed, she ask me to come back and she bought me books because my father refuse.
(JosephineB4)

Other actions that showed parental attitudes of teachers were expressed in Buea:

GraceB4: *She [Grace] makes sure that we don't bring dirt to the class; if you do not comb your hair, she will give you a comb to comb your hair then the next time she will punish you. [...] Every Monday morning, she inspects everybody's nails and teeth and punish those who do not brush their teeth*

Harry: *Do you think it is good to look at children's mouth and teeth in class?*

All: *Yes...*

GraceB2: *because there is a girl in our class who did not use to brush her teeth and she will be smelling and we cannot learn. Now she is very neat and everybody is happy to sit with her [Grace] don't like people to transmit germs in class, so she makes sure we are very neat.*

As the excerpts above show, students endorsed teacher attitudes that were friendly and parental; actions like greeting them in and out of school as well as responding positively

to their greetings, actively showing concern for their physical and psychological wellbeing and offering advice when they needed it. These attitudes made teachers approachable and encouraged learners in their learning process.

4.1.1.3. Appreciative reaction to students' efforts

Child-participants were generally positive about teachers who appreciated their efforts in school through praise and reward. In the sentence completion activity, students expressed a liking for a teacher who *'approves [appreciates] what I do when I make an effort'* (KinivoB4); *'makes me to be happy when I answer a question'* (GeorgeG3); *'does not do as if I have not tried, but helps me to try more better'* (GraceG3). They appreciated actions like asking other students to clap when a student responded well, giving an extra mark for active participation, or simply accepting their contribution to classroom activities. Teacher praise was very strongly articulated in all group interviews with students arguing that:

If you answer a question well, they have to clap for you so that you will like to answer questions in class. (AlbertoG2)

If I am a teacher, I will make sure that when children try to do something, even if they don't succeed, I will make sure that I praise them for trying so that they will struggle to do more better next time. (GraceG3)

When he [Ivo] makes a mistake on the blackboard and we see it, everybody will like to be the first to go and correct it. When you correct it, he will thank you and he will tell the other children who saw the mistake 'well done' and we will be happy. (KinivoB5)

Clearly, praising students for their efforts in the teaching/learning process resonated positively with them; it encouraged them to want to do *'more better next time.'* Praise was also seen to be an important factor in generating classroom participation and student-initiated activities like scrambling to correct the teacher rather than waiting for

the teacher to correct himself. It also encouraged students to ask questions which were helpful in extending their knowledge:

[...] even when you ask a question in class, she will say 'very good' or 'excellent question' and she will explain again and give many examples and we will understand. Then she will ask us questions to see if we have understood and then she will ask us to clap for the person who asked the question and that we should thank the person for asking a good question (JosephineG1)

As was mentioned earlier, students were generally happy with a teacher whose attitudes made them approachable; they were afraid of asking questions to a teacher who was unable to respond to their greetings. Having a teacher who praised them not only for their responses and efforts, but also for their questions was very motivating. What is more, it made them realise the importance of asking questions in class and as such they felt free to ask questions both because of the praise that came with asking questions, but also in order to develop their learning:

if I can ask my teacher questions and he says 'good question' and he does not make it as if I am foolish, I will learn well because when I ask questions and he answers, I understand better and I can also answer questions and explain to my friends better.(AlbertoG2)

In addition to teacher praise, students also liked teachers who rewarded them for their efforts and successes. They talked of prizes they had won because they had performed well in a subject or because they had contributed to classroom activity in a significant way. The most common of these was the tendency for some of their teachers (George, Martha, and Josephine) to give extra marks for exemplary participation in classroom activities:

She was always the first in English because [George] gave her marks for answering many questions but now, I am the champion [...] I always explain things better in class and I answer questions more than her. (GeorgeG3)

Clearly there seems to be a motivational dimension to appreciative feedback on student learning and development. The fact that child-participants liked teachers who appreciated and rewarded their achievements and efforts suggests that such appreciation can influence their motivation to learn positively.

4.2. Instrumental Factors: Teaching towards examinations

A major point of consensus amongst students was that a good teacher facilitates their success by indicating what they need to study for their examinations. According to them, the main goal of being in school is to pass their exams; as such, practices that helped them achieve this goal were seen as good practices by the children. To them, a good teacher is one who can *'teach us well so that we should understand and pass our exam to go to the secondary school'* (KinivoB1). This instrumental criterion for determining good teaching was manifested in students' references to teachers whose students performed well or poorly both in internal and official examinations. Josephine's students for example identified a former teacher as a very bad teacher because *'only 20 children used to pass and all the others will fail'*. Apart from one case (which I will examine later), students' choice of their best English lesson was mainly based on their scores in the practice exercise:

AlbertoG2: *This is my best lesson*

Harry: *is it the one in which you had 5 on 10?*

AlbertoG2: *[general laughter] No, I had 10 over 10, [pointing at her book] look, this is it here.*

Harry: *And did you do well in the exercise GraceG3?*

GraceG3: *[smiling] I had nine on nine*

GraceG4: *Me too [all now laughing]*

GraceG1: *Everybody had nine in the exercise.*

Harry: *So are you happy with that lesson because everybody scored nine?*

All: *Yes sir*

Harry: *Is that the only reason why you liked the lesson?*

GraceG4: *No, [all talking now] because everybody understood.*

Further probing into what they meant by ‘understood’ revealed that for these learners, a pass mark was generally an indication of *understanding* and as such reinforced their preference for lessons in which they scored good marks as well as teachers and teaching that resulted in them scoring good marks. A deviant perspective, however, emerged in Yaounde where one student presented, as his best lesson, one in which he scored a zero in the practice exercise. This was particularly interesting because it was the only student who identified Kingley’s lesson as his best lesson. He was unable to recall how the lesson was taught but said he had selected the lesson because after failing in the practice exercise, his friend had helped him understand the lesson better:

KinivoB1: *[...] because he [teacher] did not tell us what to add, so I had zero. But after, my friend explain to me what I was supposed to do, and I know it very well now.*

Harry: *Wait a minute. Who helps you to understand more? Your friend or your teacher.*

KinivoB1: *I understand better when my friend explains to me.*

This deviation from what appeared to be the norm points to an important pedagogic feature identified by learners which I will explore later. Noteworthy at this point however, is the fact that although KinivoB1 appeared to be more interested in the fact that his understanding was facilitated via peer support, there is evidence elsewhere in the interview that he sees success in exams as a criterion for determining a good teacher.

Being in the final year of primary school there is no doubt that these learners are concerned about success in classroom exams as this assures them of their preparedness for their final certificate examinations. In addition to possessing affective qualities, a

teacher who can give them an idea of the content of their examination is, for them, a good teacher. The following excerpt seems to confirm this:

KinivoG1: *Il peut nous encourager à lire nos devoirs comme Ivo, il nous dit parfois que ceci va arriver à l'examen, préparez-vous. Il nous prévient la section qui viendra à l'épreuve et c'est ça qu'il donne à l'examen. Mais Kingsley, il va même nous mentir. [He can encourage us to read our homework, like Ivo; he tells us sometimes what will come in our exams and warns us to prepare. He informs us of the sections of our lessons which will come in the exam paper, but Kingsley will even lie to us]*

Harry: *Donc vous aimez un enseignant qui vous parle de l'examen, qui vous prévient de ce qu'il faut apprendre pour l'examen c'est ça? [So you like a teacher who tells you what to read for the exams, right?]*

KinivoG1: *En tout cas c'est moi; je ne sais pas ce que les autres pensent. [In any case, that's my opinion. I do not know what the others think.]*

Harry: *Et les autres, vous êtes d'accord avec KinivoG1? [And the others, do you agree with KinivoG1?]*

All: *Oui, on est d'accord. [Yes we agree]*

Talking about what a good teacher should do, GeorgeG5 asserts that she should

...be taking examples with you, telling you to come out, giving examples and saying that 'this thing will come in the exams, so learn it well'. He should say that 'we will write exams tomorrow, you people should go and learn this.'

Asked how it would help students if they are told what would appear in their examination, GeorgeG5 explains: *'If they tell us what will come in the exams and they change some things and they don't put the same things like in class, you will easily understand.'* It is clear from this that the student does not expect to be given exact examination questions but would like to have clues as to what kinds of questions are likely to occur in their examinations. It is this expectation that constitutes part of their assessment of their current teachers as the quote below illustrates:

MarthaG3: *I like my madam because she tells us what we will write in the common entrance [into secondary school] exams.*

Harry: *Does that mean that she tells you examination questions?*

MarthaG3: *No.*

Harry: *What does it mean then?*

***MarthaG3:** She gives us past exam questions and tell us that some sections always repeat a lot in the examination*

***MarthaG4:** She advise us to read particular sections very well because they will come in the exam.*

***MarthaG3:** And she gives us many exercises so that we should remember the thing.*

This excerpt, which represents perspectives of current teachers (George, Josephine, Martha, Ivo and Alberto) expressed by students in both sites, shows the extent to which students, like their teachers are subjected to examination pressure.

4.3. Language teaching practices/activities

In this section, I present and analyse data related to the actual teaching practices that students perceived as good. Students' perspectives of good pedagogic practices were expressed in phrases describing teachers' practices like 'ask me many questions', 'explains well' 'makes a lot of action with us', 'gives me many exercises' etc as can be seen in the following excerpts from the first group interview I conducted in Yaounde:

***KinivoG1:** [...] I want a teacher who helps us to concentrate in our book. Who can help us to learn.*

***Harry:** By doing what?*

***KinivoG4:** By asking us questions.*

***KinivoG3:** By explaining*

***KinivoG2:** Giving us exercises*

***KinivoG5:** Making us to understand very well.*

***Harry:** How will he make you to understand very well?*

***KinivoG5:** By explaining and doing the action and giving us exercises.*

***Harry:** What other interesting activities will you want your teacher to do in the class with you?*

***KinivoG2:** He should first give an example before giving an exercise.*

[...]

***Harry:** Okay KinivoG4 I enjoy my English lesson when my teacher....,*

***KinivoG4:** ...asks me many questions to make me understand.*

***Harry:** Good, KinivoG5 I enjoy my English lesson when my teacher....,*

***KinivoG5:** ...explains well and gives many examples.*

***Harry:** Good. KinivoG2, I enjoy my English lesson when my teacher....,*

***KinivoG2:** ... makes a lot of action with us, so we can understand*

***Harry:** Good, KinivoG1, I enjoy my English lesson when my teacher....,*

KinivoG1: ... does not beat me or insult me. When he **explains** well and helps me to pass.

Harry: Good, KinivoG3, I enjoy my English lesson when my teacher....,

KinivoG3: ...makes me laugh and **gives me many exercises**.

The excerpt above captures most of the practices that students identified as good teaching practices across the entire data set and will constitute the basis for the following discussion of students' perspectives of good teaching.

4.3.1. Explanations and Demonstrations

In all group interviews, students expressed a liking for the ability of teachers to explain lessons to them. In both research sites, statements like 'He/She explains well' were very common. Writing about the way his teacher taught his best lesson on verbs, MarthaB2 explains that '*She like telling things every time and like explaining, that is why I have never had a teacher like that since when I started school*'. In most cases, students associated explanations with demonstrations. Talking about their criteria for selecting a good teacher, JosephineB4 affirms that '*I will select a teacher who will explain and do some actions*'. The belief that learning could be facilitated when learners are involved in demonstrations was also expressed by students: '*When we are doing the action we understand it better.*' (GeorgeG5). This is re-echoed elsewhere in the interviews through such statements as:

She made us understand the lesson because she was showing the action when she was explaining. (JosephineG4)

GeorgeG2: When he was explaining the lesson, he was doing the actions; he was dancing, he was jumping and he was singing...and he asked us to jump and dance

GeorgeG4: When he said that dance, we all danced, when he said that shout, everybody was shouting.

GeorgeG3: *When he said that sing, we were singing that the day is bright [tunes song and all start singing].*

To these students, practices like ‘showing the action’, ‘doing the actions’, ‘dancing’, ‘jumping’ ‘singing’ ‘explaining and demonstrating’ etc were all likeable forms of demonstration used by their teachers. The excerpt above from George’s girls shows how young learners are able to take control of the discussion, building on one another’s idea to explain their point. At this point in the interview, my presence in the interview seemed to have been ignored completely as students were excited about expressing themselves and could go on describing what, to them, was a very memorable lesson procedure. To students, demonstrations, whether done by the teacher or by other students, add fun to the lesson making it understandable and memorable. This fun element is illustrated by the following vivid description of Mr Ivo’s lesson on the present continuous tense:

KinivoG5: *When he was teaching, he was making that we should laugh. When he is saying something, he is doing the action. He makes that we should understand well.*

Harry: *Is it because of the action that you understand well?*

All: *Yes sir*

Harry: *Which action, for example did he do that you can remember from this lesson?*

KinivoG5: *He was making as if he is a football player...*

KinivoG4: *He was dribbling and kicking the air and jumping like a mad man [general laughter].*

While explanations and demonstrations made lessons memorable, there was a general consensus that explanation was even more profitable to learning when it was done repeatedly. In Buea, for example, GraceG4 asked me the following question about my own practice: ‘*But if you teach teachers and they do not understand, will you repeat it again?*’ The discussion that followed pointed to their strong preference for teachers who were happy to explain repeatedly. Elsewhere, JosephineB5 justifies his endorsement of

repeated explanations by outlining what he will do if he were a teacher: *‘Sometimes if [students] do not understand something, I will explain it again then I will give them an exercise to do so that they can understand better.’* Students identified this practice in the teaching of their current teachers in statements like: *When she teaches and then we put up our hand to say that we have not understood, she will repeat it until we understand* (GraceG5); *When she is teaching, she makes children to understand; if you don’t understand she will explain it again* (JosephineB1); *He is the best teacher because [...] when he teaches us, at the end he asks us if we understand and if we do not understand, he will repeat what he was teaching* (KinivoB2).

4.3.2. Exemplification and personalisation of learning

Related to the practice of explanations and demonstrations was that of providing examples that helped students grasp language items better. Students’ perceptions of good language teaching included practices like *‘giving us many examples so that we can understand better’* (GraceB4). In the same light, child-participants recounted instances when they had been helped by their teachers to understand the English lesson through examples. The following excerpt about a pre-reading vocabulary drill in Buea illustrates students’ endorsement of exemplification:

Harry: *So if I understand you well, it is because your teacher repeated the explanation that you understood the meaning of the words in the passage?*

AlbertoG2: *No, he can repeat and we will not still understand...*

[...]

AlbertoG5: *He gave us an example [...] he said that for example when the [Buea] mountain erupted, many people in Isangele ran away from their house and they did not have a house to stay, so they were homeless.*

AlbertoG2: *He also said that when they were homeless they did not also have food to eat; when they cannot eat for many days until people go and give them food, they will suffer from starvation.*

Harry: *So did you understand the words because of the examples?*

AlbertoG5: *Yes, because we understand the example better because it was in Buea that some of the people were living.*

The foregoing excerpt shows that examples play an important role in enhancing student understanding of vocabulary and reading as a whole. What is more, it shows students' endorsement of contextually relevant and familiar examples. The example used by the teacher to illustrate vocabulary items like 'homeless' and 'starvation' above is related to a recent volcanic eruption on mount Cameroon which is situated in Buea; the students are therefore familiar with the events that took place and can better ascertain the meaning of the words. No doubt therefore, AlbertoG5 acknowledges that her understanding is enhanced by the fact that 'it was in Buea that some of the people were living.'

In addition to their preference for contextually relevant exemplification, there was also a consensus across the data set for examples that were relevant to students' personal lives and experiences. There was a clear liking for practices such as '*taking examples with you [student], telling you to come out*' (GeorgeG5). In his description of his teacher's practice, one of Martha's students wrote:

I like our madam because when she teach English she will take examples from us...she will tell us to stand up and talk about how we came to school then she will teach us how to tell somebody about how to go somewhere. (MarthaB3)

The foregoing excerpt shows how the teacher draws from the student's personal experience of going to school to illustrate how that experience can be translated into the language function of giving directions. Other instances of teaching practices that drew from students' own lived experiences were expressed as good/likeable practice across the data set. Students recounted instances where their teacher '*called three children in*

front of the class and we said who was tall, taller and tallest’ (GraceB2). This example was reminiscent of the practice of a teacher in Yaounde as recounted by the students:

GeorgeG4: *He brought some children in front of the class [...] He took an example by taking tall people, short people and he taught us tall, taller, tallest.*

GeorgeG5: *Aisha was the tallest*

GeorgeG3: *And GeorgeG1 was the shortest [general laughter]*

In describing another good lesson taught by Josephine, the student explained that:

When she is teaching a lesson, she takes it from examples from our homes or even as we are playing with our friends, to explain well for us to understand. (JosephineB2)

The excerpts above are examples of how much value learners give to teaching practices that relate to their personal life experiences. Also, in describing what they would do if they were teaching a lesson about adjectives for example AlbertoG5 explained that ‘*I will first tell the child to tell me the colour of his [school] uniform then after, I will ask him to tell me the colour of his Christmas clothes and then I will teach him other colours*’. This imagined scenario from the student perspective shows how much value child-participants attached to examples that are related to their personal experiences.

Another feature of good exemplification that emerged from the student data was the teacher’s use of realia; describing her best English lesson, AlbertoG5 says:

I like the composition lesson because [the teacher] brought the spices to class and we knew what we wanted to write about. Even if you cannot cook the food, if you write about how to cook the food, you can go home and try to cook it too.

In the discussion that follows, all five students in this group agreed that realia appeals more to them than simple visual representations of the same objects: ‘*I like it better when they bring the thing to class than when they draw it because when I see the real thing, I remember than a confusing picture*’ (AlbertoG3). When later in the interview I

ask whether they would want a teacher to bring a life cow to class, their reaction revealed that they understand the limitations of relying on realia, but remain strongly interested in teaching practices that make use of any form of visual aid for exemplification of knowledge.

4.3.3. Questioning and feedback

Also connected to explanations and demonstrations is questioning both by the teacher and by students. Students generally endorsed teachers who gave them the opportunity to ask questions whenever they did not understand a particular aspect of the lesson. Talking about what a good teacher should do, KinivoB4 recommends that: *‘Il doit bien enseigner, qu’il ne nous interdise pas de lui demander si on ne comprends pas’*. [He should teach us well, he shouldn’t stop us from asking him questions when we do not understand him.] This opinion relates to their experience with one of their teachers, whose strictness impacts negatively on their learning:

There is one thing that I am afraid of Mr Kingsley. I am afraid of him because when you ask him a question and you don’t understand, after he will abuse [insult] you that you are a bullock or a sheep (KinivoB1).

Questions help students clarify doubts and as such, enhance their comprehension. In most cases, when they said a teacher teaches well, they explained this by referring to the teacher’s ability to explain clearly, ask and elicit questions as well as give examples and practice exercises. In the case of questioning, students thought learning will be facilitated if their teachers encouraged them to ask questions freely. Describing the practice of a good teacher in this regard the students held that:

He will make sure that we understand by doing that if you don’t understand you should put your hand up and ask him what you don’t understand and he will tell you how to do it. Or if it is reading comprehension, he will explain to you what

happened in the passage that you never knew and you will understand what he wants you to understand. (KinivoB1)

More specifically, Alberto's students explained how he encourages them to ask questions recounting an instance in which by encouraging students to ask him questions and by providing alternative explanations their learning was enhanced:

AlbertoG3: *I like him because when he teaches, after he finish explaining, he will ask us if we have any questions. He will even call some people and say they look like they have not understand and that they should ask him what they have not understand.*

[...]

Harry: *When you ask questions, what does he do?*

AlbertoG1: *He will explain again until we understand*

AlbertoG3: *Then he will ask if we have other questions, if we don't ask questions, he will ask us his own questions.*

Harry: *Why do you think it is good to ask questions?*

AlbertoG2: *Because if I cannot understand something in class and I cannot ask, I will never understand and I will fail. But if I can ask questions, the teacher will explain it to me more better. Like when Mr Alberto was teaching us composition, I did not know what to put in the introduction and in the body so I asked him and he explain to me. Now I can write better.*

In addition to encouraging students to ask questions, good teachers, according to these students should also challenge learners to think, by asking them questions. It is when they are challenged to answer questions from their peers and from the teacher that they remember what they learn. Talking about how he would respond to student questions if he were a teacher, JosephineB5 says:

If they [students] ask me questions, I will not tell them the answer first; I will tell them to think about the answer and if they cannot answer, I will ask the class who can answer the question and if the class cannot answer the question, then I will give them the answer.

The excerpt above reflects students' own awareness of the importance of engaging in cognitively challenging endeavours in learning. Students are not just empty vessels; they can be challenged to think beyond their present knowledge. JosephineB5 thinks that it is

necessary to encourage students to find answers to their own questions; for him, the teacher's role is to provide answers only when the whole class is unable to provide an answer.

A further perspective expressed by students was that a good teacher is one who checks students' understanding by asking them questions: *'[...] she will ask us questions to see if we have understood [...]' (JosephineG1)*. Students thought that it is not enough for teachers to ask them if they understand the lesson; a good teacher should ensure that they have effectively understood a lesson, by asking them questions about the lesson content. AlbertoG5 expresses this view in the following statement: *'I prefer a teacher who ask us if we have understood and if we say yes, she ask us her own questions because she will make sure that we have understood well.'* This perspective was shared by students across all interviews as they described the good practices of their teachers with statements like the following:

I like that when we said that we have understood the teacher will ask us to stand up. Then he will ask us questions and if you answer, you sit down, if you don't answer, you keep standing up. Because if we just say we have understood and the teacher continues the lesson, some children will be ashamed to say they have not understood. But if the teacher ask back his own questions, he will see that some people cannot answer and he will explain it again better (AlbertoG4)

He is the best teacher because [...] when he teaches us, at the end he asks us if we understand and if we do not understand, he will repeat what he was teaching. Then we can ask some questions; [students] will put up their hands to ask questions and he will answer, and he will also ask us questions and we will answer. (KinivoB2)

He always asks us a lot of questions during the lesson; when we answer we understand better, even if we give the wrong answer, another person can correct me or even Mr. George can correct me and I will understand better. (GeorgeG1)

She asks questions and helps us to understand better. When you don't know the right answer and you give a wrong one, she will say that you have tried and she will correct you. When you give the correct answer, she will ask you to explain why you think that your answer is correct and you will explain it and understand better (GraceB5)

The foregoing excerpts reveal students' perception of the pedagogic importance of questions in the learning process. To them, questions helped them develop and consolidate understanding especially when they were cognitively challenging. Students did not just want to be provided with knowledge, but to be challenged not only to find the knowledge, but also to justify the knowledge. It was not only the fact that they could ask and answer questions that made for good teaching; they had clear ideas about how a good teacher was supposed to mediate the questioning and answers in the classroom. Comparing two teachers, students were able to express their opinion about classroom processes involving questions and answers:

I want that [Kingsley] should teach us well because when he is going to give the reading comprehension, he is going just to write the answer. He gives us the reading comprehension passage and gives us 5 minutes to read and answer the questions. When we finish, he chooses only people who put up their hands and he will just write the correct answers on the blackboard. But with Mr Ivo, if you answer a question, he will ask you where the answer comes from in the passage and why did you chosen that answer, but [Kingsley] will just write the answer without making us to think. So I think that he must first look well at the answer and ask questions for us to understand the answer better. (KinivoG1)

This perspective in Yaounde was consistent with that expressed in Buea; students liked Josephine because in addition to encouraging them to ask and answer questions, she sometimes 'will ask somebody [who had answered a question] in class to explain the answer well so that we can understand how he knew the answer.' (JosephineB2). The perspectives expressed by both groups of students shows that they are equally interested in practices that push them beyond just providing answers to questions.

4.3.4. Sharing responsibility for teaching and learning

Another recurrent feature of good teaching expressed by child-participants in both research sites was that of shared responsibility for teaching and learning. In all the classes observed, there were instances when individual students were appointed to do something in front of the whole class. This included asking them to do things like writing something on the board (e.g. a short paragraph in Kingsley's composition lesson or underlining words/sounds in Grace's lesson), acting out a part of a text (e.g. in George's lessons) or just demonstrating the meaning of a verb (e.g. in Josephine's lesson), or arranging things in a sequence (e.g. in Alberto's lesson on how to cook a local meal) or looking up a word in the dictionary and correcting the teacher's spelling of the word (e.g. in Ivo's lessons) or deleting predictions on the board that do not appear in a reading text (e.g. in Martha's reading lesson). The excitement generated by the performance of these activities was not only observable in the classroom, but also emerged in the interviews. Students liked it when they were able to do something in front of their peers; they wanted to *'go to the board'* because *'When I go to the board, I will be happy because if I make a mistake, the teacher will correct me'* (JosephineB5); or because going to the board *'make me feel like I am the teacher [...] I like it because I can teach something which other children will understand it and I will also understand it better'* (GraceG3). These two excerpts suggest that the observable excitement of going to do something in front of the class can be construed as related to students' sense of fulfilment in sharing responsibility for teaching and learning. In JosephineB5's case, the motivation is to be able to check his understanding against that of the teacher while for GraceG3, it is the feeling of being in the teacher's position, of being able to share knowledge with peers and in the process consolidate one's own knowledge that is the central motivating factor.

During the interviews, one of the things I wanted students to tell me was what will guide them in their choice of a good English teacher, if they were asked to observe a number of teachers in order to decide which one to employ in their school. Although students tended to personalise the criteria to reflect their own learning preferences, they were still able to articulate what they understood to be good practice in terms of their own role in the teaching and learning process. The following excerpt from Buea is representative of students' perspectives on the subject in both research sites:

JosephineB1: *I will select a teacher who will explain and do some actions*

JosephineB2: *And give us exercises and homework. She can give us words to go and look for the meanings.*

Harry: *Would you prefer that the teacher should give you the meanings of words or ask you to go and find the meanings?*

All: *(Speaking randomly) I prefer to look for the meaning myself; I want to do research and find the meaning myself. I prefer that she should give us homework to go and do it on my own.*

[...]

JosephineB4: *When I am doing it at home, I do it on a rough book then I can ask my elder brother to check it.*

[...]

JosephineB5: *I like when the teacher is explaining something, but she should not explain it all. I like that she should allow some for us to go and find out and come and explain in class.*

This excerpt above reveals a number of interesting perspectives about what students consider good practice: a good teacher should give students practice exercises and homework, he/she should not explain everything but encourage students to find out for themselves, he/she should give students the opportunity to explain their findings in class.

A common feature of most of the lessons observed over phase one of this study is that they ended with a practice exercise which was most often marked by the teacher or by students marking their peers' books under the supervision of the teacher. In other cases,

students were given homework which was then marked at the beginning of the next English lesson. This tradition was somehow represented in the data as good practice; students identified the provision of practice exercises and homework as good practice. In talking about what they would do if they were a teacher, JosephineB5 explains that *'Sometimes if [students] do not understand something, I will explain it again then I will give them an exercise to do so that they can understand better'*. To this student, apart from explaining things to learners, giving them exercises may be a good way of helping them 'understand better.' In recounting how her best lesson was taught, KinivoG4 raises amongst other things the fact that the teacher *'gave us an exercise and we did the exercise and we exchanged our books and marked the exercise and everybody had at least 7 on 10.'* As the conversation unfolds, the same student argues that *'When I do the exercise, I understand it more better and I can explain it to another child who has not understood.'*

In the same light, discussions about homework revealed that students perceived these as an opportunity to explore learning on their own without having to depend only on the teacher. The following perspectives were expressed:

'I like it when the teacher give us homework [...] I can go and look for the thing myself and I will learn it well [...] if I don't understand, I can ask my friend or my brother and if he cannot tell me, I will ask the teacher and he will explain it to me. [...] I can also explain to my friends and they will help me, if I don't understand it well, the teacher can also help me understand it well. (GeorgeG1)

If she ask us to go and find out, it will make me to make an effort to learn [...] it is not good when the teacher tells us everything; it is good that we should also do our homework so that we can learn on our own and understand. (GraceG1)

To these students, homework provides an opportunity for independent learning, but also for students to be able to identify their difficulties and seek solutions from their peers

and teacher. Their perspectives also reveal their understanding of learning as not only teacher-led, but also student-led. It is by finding out things for themselves that they are able to contribute to classroom activity through explaining to their friends and in the process, benefiting from teacher and peer feedback.

Another instance of students' interest in sharing the responsibility for teaching and learning was expressed in Buea where Alberto's students appreciated the fact that their teacher made use of realia in one of his composition writing lessons but also wanted the teacher to ask them to bring visual aid to class:

***AlbertoG3:** I want that if he want to teach us a composition about how to cook something, he should give us homework to bring the different things [ingredients] to class.*

***Harry:** But he brought all the things to class, is there anything wrong with that?*

***AlbertoG3:** No sir, but if he ask us to bring them, I will ask my mother and she will explain some to me and I will understand the lesson faster.*

***Harry:** (to the other girls) Is that true?*

***AlbertoG1:** Yes sir. If we already know how to cook the food, we will easily know how to write the composition well.*

***AlbertoG5:** If we bring the things to class, it will be more interesting because we will see if we can remember the names of all the things that we need to cook Ekpwang. [...] If some children do not bring everything, they will learn the other things from those who have brought everything.*

Being asked to bring teaching aids to class was a way, not only of involving them in the teaching learning process, but an opportunity to do some preliminary research that will be helpful in understanding the lesson. What is more, it provided an opportunity for them to learn new vocabulary and to share their learning with other students who might not find all the 'things' needed for the particular lesson.

4.3.5. Collaborative learning (Group/pair work)

In this study, group and pair work emerged, from students' perspectives, as a pedagogic practice that responds to students' learning styles. Apart from a few objections which I will present later, students were generally happy about learning from their peers. KinivoB1's best lesson was one in which his understanding had been facilitated by his peer:

Harry: *So it was your best lesson because you had a zero?*

KinivoB1: *No, because he [teacher] did not tell us what to add, so I had zero. But after, my friend explained to me what I was supposed to do, and I know it very well now.*

Harry: *Wait a minute. Who helps you to understand more? Your friend or your teacher.*

KinivoB1: *I understand better when my friend explains to me.*

The extract above comes from a point in the interview when participants are talking about their best English language lessons in the first two months of the first term and this pupil selects the lesson in which he had a zero in the practice exercise. The reason he likes this lesson is because his friend helped him understand it better. Peer support is clearly the preferred learning strategy for this learner as it is for others across both research sites. Elsewhere in Yaoundé, George's students expressed preference for collaborative work as encouraged by their teacher. They recounted how their teacher challenges them to resolve language problems in groups:

GeorgeG3: *[...] He will give every group a paper and he will write words on the board and each group will discuss the meaning
[...]*

GeorgeG2: *We will discuss it; if your answer is correct we will accept it and we will write it.*

GeorgeG3: *Our group was first.*

In Buea, students also identified collaborative learning activities as good practice:

AlbertoG1: *I prefer that we should discuss something in a group before giving the answer.*

Harry: *Do you agree?*

AlbertoG3: *Yes sir*

The most compelling arguments for collaborative work came from Josephine's male students who clearly expressed a preference for learning from peers. They thought they would learn better when their teacher encourages other students to answer the questions they ask:

...when the child answers the question, the child will remember it very well, I will also remember because maybe next time, it will be me who will explain the answer to another child. [...] if you don't know something, your friend can tell you (JosephineB5)

Even more compelling was the ensuing discussion on the merits of group/pair work in which they captured a typical lesson procedure of their teacher explaining how useful such a procedure was for their learning:

JosephineB2: *Any question that is difficult for us, she will ask us to work in groups to find the answer.*

Harry: *How do you form your groups?*

JosephineB2: *We work with our bench mates.*

Harry: *I see. So you discuss with your bench mates before you give the answer?*

JosephineB5: *Yes, because when you are two or three, you think more better than when you are alone.*

Harry: *What do you think about what JosephineB5 just said?*

JosephineB3: *I think it is true*

All: *Yes sir.*

[...]

JosephineB4: *When she teaches us composition, sometimes we write alone, sometimes we do it in a group*

Harry: *Which do you prefer?*

JosephineB5: *I prefer it in a group because when you make a mistake, your friend can correct you. But when you are alone, you just write and make a mistake and you continue without knowing.*

JosephineB4: *You can write and you put 'is', and you want to think again to write you just come and put another 'is' but when your friend sees it, he will tell you so that you can cancel one 'is'.*

Harry: *JosephineB2?*

JosephineB2: *When I am writing, I try to write it alone, I do not want my friend to see it, but when I have a problem I cannot spell a word I ask my friend to spell it for me on a rough paper or I try to spell it for my friend to check it. I*

will write alone so that they do not say we are doing copy work. I will tell my friend what I want to write, but we will not write the same.

The excerpt above not only illustrates Josephine's use of collaborative work but shows students' awareness of its benefits. Even JosephineB2 who apparently prefers to start doing his work alone recognises the importance of checking with peers whenever he is uncertain about his spelling. It is through collaborating with peers that they are able to develop and consolidate new knowledge.

This notwithstanding, there was some amount of disagreement about peer support especially amongst 4 of the five girls in Josephine's class.

JosephineG3: *I prefer when I am working alone. If they teach a subject now, when I go home, I can revise it. When I come back to school, I can ask the teacher. I can also ask my friends too but I prefer the teacher.*

[...]

JosephineG2: *I prefer when it is the teacher who tells me the correct answer than when it is another child.*

Disagreement about group/pair work was even more strongly expressed amongst

Alberto's girls:

AlbertoG4: *I do not agree because when we discuss it, one person may not understand and the rest can understand. Then when another person has to talk alone, he will try and read well to answer correctly, but when we are in a group a person can just allow others to read and he will steal the answer and put up his hand to answer as if it is his answer.*

[...]

AlbertoG3: *I agree because all of you have to be one and the answer that you people have chosen, all of you must agree on the answer*

AlbertoG1: *Because if one person gives the answer, the teacher will explain better and all of us will understand.*

Opinions were also divided between the durability of pupil or teacher responses with some students preferring one over the other:

Harry: *If they ask a question in class and you don't know the answer. Do you prefer when it is your friend who gives the answer or when it is your teacher who gives the answer. Which one do you remember most? I will start with AlbertoG4*

AlbertoG4: *when the teacher gives us the answer*

AlbertoG3: *When the child gives the answer.*

AlbertoG1: *I prefer it when it is a child because the child can give an answer which is correct and children will take it as a right that the teacher should always say the answer which is not correct because in the exams the teacher will not give us the answer*

AlbertoG4: *But when the teacher gives the answer we will put it in our heads*

AlbertoG3: *The child also can give the right answer*

AlbertoG4: *Because when the child gives an answer the teacher will say it is very good. Then he will say an example and ask that why is that answer correct and we must answer the question. If we cannot answer the question he will say that we have not yet understood and he will explain again.*

In the above excerpt, AlbertoG1 and AlbertoG3 are in favour of peer learning because, as they argue, the teacher will not always be there to help them. AlbertoG4 prefers to learn exclusively from the teacher because apart from just providing answers, the teacher can better explain why a particular answer is right or wrong. The contrasting opinions expressed above are reminiscent of the differences that exist in individual learning styles and point to the challenges that teachers face, if they have to attain to different needs in their classes.

4.3.6. Use of creative activities (Stories, Songs and Rhymes)

During the interviews, students did identify some creative activities that were of interest to them. In describing how her best English lesson - a lesson on 'reported speech' - was taught for example, KinivoG4 explains that the teacher

...started the lesson by asking us to sing a song, then he asked us to make any sentence, then he wrote our sentences on the blackboard with our names. After, he asked us to tell somebody what everybody said. Then he asked us what we have changed from the original sentence when we tell somebody. He asked us many questions and explained very well to us, then he gave us an exercise and we did the exercise and we exchanged our books and marked the exercise and everybody had at least 7 over 10. He asked us to clap for ourselves (KinivoG4).

This transition from song to language lesson was a consistent feature in Ivo's lessons. In a good number of the lessons observed, he started with a song or rhyme and through guiding questions enabled students to identify language forms from the song or rhyme. Other teachers who made use of songs and rhymes in the lessons I observed were George, Grace and Josephine. George's students describe the procedure of one of their best English lessons in the following terms:

GeorgeG2: *When he was explaining the lesson [on Verbs] he was doing the actions; he was dancing, he was jumping and he was singing...and he asked us to jump and dance*

GeorgeG4: *When he said that dance, we all danced, when he said that shout, everybody was shouting.*

GeorgeG3: *When he said that sing, we were singing that 'the day is bright' (tunes song and all start singing)*

The spontaneity with which students took turns to describe the lesson as well as of the singing that followed this description of the lesson suggest how much they must have been interested in the song element of the lesson. Further into the interview, they argue that *'when we are singing and doing the action, we easily remember the words'* (GeorgeG2). In the same light, JosephineB3 justifies his choice of best lesson by the singing activity in the lesson: *'I liked the lesson especially when we were singing the song'* In the ensuing discussion, it is revealed that songs make lessons memorable: *'I can remember the song and I will remember what the teacher was teaching us in the lesson'* (JosephineB3) and this perspective is immediately complemented by JosephineB1's addition, *'even the rhyme.'*

Another creative activity identified as good practice was the use of stories; students expressed interest in teachers who told them stories as well as teachers who encouraged

them to tell their own stories in class. In Yaounde, for example, students listed History amongst their favourite subjects, justifying this by its association with stories: *'I like history because we study the past. It is like story telling'* (GeorgeG1). Refocusing the discussion on English language teaching and learning, students recounted interesting lessons in which teachers had used stories to teach different aspects of the English language. In Buea, for example students identified a previous teacher as their best ever English teacher and went ahead to explain that *'She always tell us stories in class [...] she will call all of us together and she will ask someone to tell a story'* (GraceG5), an explanation that was later confirmed in the boys:

GraceB2: *She always told us stories in class; she will call us together and she will ask someone to tell a story*

GraceB1: *She tells stories and also ask us to tell stories; then she ask us questions about the story and then she ask us to identify verbs and nouns and pronouns in the story*

Harry: *Is it the stories that you liked or the verbs and nouns?*

GraceB5: *Because if the story is interesting we will understand the grammar lesson too very easily and she used to give us many exercises to do.*

Probing further, both groups of students remembered a grammar lesson on the simple past tense during which the teacher told them a story entitled *'Essing wanted to eat fish'* and as she told the story, students noted down all the verbs in both their infinitive and past tense forms. At the end of the story, students compared their notes in pairs and together established the rules for changing certain verbs into the simple past tense forms. Students remembered vividly other stories - like *'Essambe killed a lion'*, *'The hunter who laughed at death'*, *'Musit and his stupid friend Sinyam'* - and scrambled to outdo each other in narrating the stories.

In both research sites, reading comprehension lessons were amongst the favourite lessons and this was often explained by the fact that the particular reading text was a

story. It was argued that stories help students learn different aspects of the language at the same time:

I like all reading comprehension of course [...] the first thing that I like is to understand because I like to keep many things in my head. A reading comprehension can help me to know what happened in a story, who was there, why were they like that, I am asking many questions [...] so I can answer the questions and learn many ways to describe something or some place and also to write my own story. (KinivoG1)

Students were able to remember a reading comprehension lesson taught by Kingsley, a teacher they had consistently described as bad. Despite their rejection of the teacher, they remembered the text entitled ‘Adou’s Flies’ ‘*because the story was interesting*’ (KinivoG2) although they were unable to say much beyond this. In Buea as well, students talked about different reading comprehension passages they could remember and all of these were those that were stories.

Although, apart from an anecdote in one of Kingsley’s lessons, I did not observe lessons where teachers had specifically used stories to teach a language item, it was evident from students’ excitement in talking about stories that they were an effective medium of language learning for these students. What is more, amongst the reading lessons that I observed, classroom participation seemed to be generated more in when the text was a story. In Yaounde for example, I noted during one of Kingsley’s lessons that:

Today seems to be a much better day for the children; many more students are raising their hands to answer questions than in previous lessons and you can see excitement in their communication with the teacher. Perhaps there is an affective dimension to a story that outweighs their assessment of the teacher? (Field notes)

4.4. Language content knowledge

In addition to procedural practices, students expressed a liking for teachers who were themselves competent in the English language; they liked teachers who *'speak in good English'* and as such were also able to help them in specific language content areas which they found relevant for their overall learning enhancement. Pronunciation was particularly popular in both research sites. Responding to which kind of teacher they will select if they had to employ a good English teacher, JosephineB5 states that *'I will like a teacher who will teach us sounds and join them to make words, because some of us cannot read well'*. In talking about a previous good teacher, GraceB2 explained that she taught them how to read *'by starting with the sounds [...] when we have problems with reading, she will revise some sounds with us so we can read the passage well.'* George's students explained that when they have difficulties with reading, their teacher *'breaks down the sounds so that we can understand and pronounce the word very well'* (GeorgeG3). GraceG5 explained that *'If you don't know how to read, she [Grace] will break it down'*. In response to why they thought pronunciation was important, students expressed the opinion that it was useful for learning how to read: *'if you learn pronunciation well, you can read easily and understand better all the subjects'* (GeorgeB1). Arguments advanced in favour of the teaching of pronunciation and its importance in reading enhancement by students in other groups suggested that for these students, good teaching was that which took care of pronunciation and reading because for them, if they could read and understand, then they were sure to have high scores in tests and exams.

Another area of language content knowledge that was ascribed to good practice was verbs. A number of the lessons identified as best lessons were on verbs and tense forms

and students associated these mostly with the actions or in some cases the stories that accompanied the particular lessons. Also, testimonies of good teaching like '*s/he teaches verbs well*' were common with some students linking this not only to the language abilities of the teacher, but also to the overall importance of the language feature to their learning and success:

What I like about the lesson is that since class one, I did not know verbs. Now I came to class six and by the grace of God Mr George came and taught us and I knew verbs through him and verbs is very important to me because without it I cannot do anything, I cannot make correct sentences and even spelling and I can fail my exams. (GeorgeB2)

The reference to spelling in the forgoing excerpt also reinforces the previously mentioned importance students ascribed to pronunciation; a mastery of pronunciation is not only useful for reading but also for learning how to spell correctly. KinivoB1 places spelling high on his expectations of good teaching: '*The best thing that a teacher is supposed to do is to make sure that his children are able to spell very well.*' A mastery of spelling was important '*because in some exams they don't give you answers, so if you know the answer, you have to spell it or you can lose marks*' (KinivoB3). In Buea, spellings and verbs were even more closely associated when students talked about composition writing. AlbertoG1 explained in some detail that in their exams, composition writing was very important and knowledge of verb forms and their spellings were necessary in writing a good composition. She argued that '*some verbs take "ed" in the past tense [but] some take only "d" [...] if you cannot spell well, you will mix them up and the teacher will mark it wrong.*' AlbertoG1's explanation here seems to confirm findings of a previous study (Kuchah 2007) which show that even teachers who practice process-writing in their classrooms tend to focus on surface features of writing when assessing students' writing. The same study conducted with

180 primary school teachers in Cameroon revealed that spellings and grammar rated very high amongst teachers' assessment criteria for writing. This may partly be responsible for the importance students attach to pronunciation, spelling and verb forms.

4.5. Summary of findings and conclusion

The presentation of findings from student perspectives and accounts of their teachers' practices reveals that for these learners, affective factors influence their perceptions of good teaching. Although they were able to identify procedural aspects of good teaching, it was clear that they did this mostly for teachers with whom they were affectively connected. In other words, when they did not like a teacher, they found it difficult to talk about his/her practices, but when they liked a teacher, they were able to describe his/her practices with some detail. The procedural features of good teaching included questioning, demonstration and exemplification, the use of creative activities like songs, rhymes and stories as well as the use of realia. In addition, students showed interest in teaching that took into account their contribution in developing content through individual and group research as well as providing teaching aid. They were also able to identify the teacher's language competence in areas like pronunciation, spellings and verbs as important for their learning. These findings suggest that children have agency over their learning and what makes learning possible and as such can identify useful patterns in the practices of their teachers.

Chapter Five

Findings (2): Foundations for context-appropriate pedagogy

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented student perspectives of what constitutes good ELT teaching practices, drawing from children's perceptions of previous and current teachers' practices as well as from their own opinions. This chapter sets the pace for an understanding of teachers' perspectives and practices of good and appropriate pedagogy by presenting findings on participants' responses to the recommended methodology enforced by the MOE. Because pre- and in-service teacher training and teacher inspection/assessment in Cameroon is based on methodological procedures of the NPA (see 1.6.1. & 1.6.2) I was eager to see how each of the *Cases* managed the stages of the NPA procedure within their individual classes. My curiosity was further aroused by the fact that all the lesson plans presented to me were designed in line with the rigid NPA procedure, yet in the actual delivery of the lessons only one teacher (Martha) seemed to have respected the stages of the lesson as documented in her lesson plan. To confirm my suspicion that there might be a disconnection between MoE policy recommendation and the actual practices of teachers, I raised the issue of non-respect of lesson plan procedure to the other six *Cases*. In the stimulated recall interviews, these teachers confirmed my suspicions that there were significant differences between the lesson plans presented to me and the actual lessons taught as captured in the excerpts below:

To be honest, I do not follow the stages of the NPA when I teach; they're a waste of time and very unrealistic in our context where children are first of all struggling to cope with the language. We face many problems which I don't think were ever taken into consideration by the authorities [...] I just follow the old introduction- presentation and evaluation model (Ivo, SR)

If I have to follow the stages of the NPA as they are in my lesson notes, I will never be able to teach up to five lessons in a day [...] I'll have to wait until the children find out the information which sometimes is not easy for them and may even demotivate them[...] The truth is that there are many things that make it impossible to follow the NPA strictly in our classes and we have to address them all before we think of introducing the NPA (Josephine, SR)

In the workshop discussions, the issue of the disconnections between the lesson plans and the actual lesson delivery was raised and justified by workshop participants on the basis of various contextual factors. The findings presented in this chapter therefore reveal the micro and macro factors that guide teachers' current practices so as to better ascertain how their pragmatic responses to such factors define for them, contextually plausible practices. Although most of the data in this section was generated on the second day of the research workshop, I have presented it here because it explains workshop participants' and the *Cases*' reasons for adopting teaching practices that deviate from MoE recommended practice by which their teaching is normally measured. In presenting the constraints emerging from the data below, I do not hope to revisit the policy-practice disconnections that have been very well documented in the literature. Rather, in this study, the constraints expressed by teachers provide a background to understanding the convergent and divergent perspectives that arise between child-participants and their teachers and as such, provide insights for an appraisal of teachers' current pedagogic practices.

5.2. Resisting the NPA: the influence of contextual challenges

As explained in section 1.6.2, the NPA was institutionalised by the MoE as an approach that will help teachers depart from their (supposedly) traditional teacher-centred practices to a learner-centred approach. Its major contribution therefore seems to be the insistence on learner-centredness as well as on the development of logical and inferential

thinking in the learner. The statements below, from two workshop participants are representative of what teachers expressed across the entire data set:

I think the NPA has done one significant thing. There are times, when we were doing the 3 stages that we just gave the definition of something and we got into a discussion. But now you do some kind of guiding talk; you get words from the children that you use to build the lesson. That is around the verification of hypotheses before you come to the synthesis where you come out with full notes. Now we build the lesson with the help of the children. I think this is very good because children participate actively in developing their own knowledge.

(Buea workshop)

If we really follow the NPA, every child will have to write something. The reason why children cannot read and write is because we write those things [lesson plans] but do not follow them. But if we follow stage by stage, every child at least; because we start from the known to the unknown, at least every child cannot be empty, they'll learn something.

(Yaoundé workshop)

Looking back at student perspectives, it is clear that the virtues of the NPA expressed by teachers would satisfy learners' expectations of good teaching in terms of learner-learner interaction processes and more importantly in empowering learners to be active participants in the learning process. Yet this recognition of the virtues of the NPA did not translate directly into teachers' practice in the classroom. The 6 teachers whose lessons departed from their lesson plans explained that they were not interested in following the stages of the NPA because they were more concerned with the 'flow' of their lessons and the responses of their learners. Even Martha (the only teacher who adhered to NPA procedure) explained that she had followed the NPA in the lesson because she had '*just attended a seminar at the teacher training college*' where teachers from practicing schools had been reminded that as teaching mentors for trainee teachers, they were obliged to '*respect the stages of the NPA at all times because student teachers can come and watch our lessons anytime; so we must always be good examples*' (Martha, SR). To her, following the stages of the NPA in her lessons had become a

natural response to the presence of anybody in her class. The tendency for teachers to depart from their lesson plans was further captured in the workshops in Buea and Yaounde where participants unanimously agreed that their lesson plans did not reflect the actual lesson delivery:

Buea2: *What I think is that we write these stages but when we are presenting lessons in class, we do not follow the lesson plan; we follow the introduction-presentation-evaluation model.*

Harry: *So why then do you write lesson plans that you will not follow?*

Buea4: *We write all of that to satisfy the head teachers and inspectors who check our lesson plans because they insist on seeing those stages. (Buea workshop)*

Harry: *When you prepare your lesson notes, do you follow the stages of the NPA?*

ALL: *Yes*

Harry: *And when you teach the lesson do you follow the stages?*

Yaounde1: *No*

[...]

Harry: *Why would you write a lesson plan that you will not follow? Why would you not follow the stages of the NPA when you teach?*

Yaounde1: *We write it for our supervisors, head teachers and inspectors. To be honest, most teachers cannot explain what they write in the lesson notes, most of us.*

Harry: *Are you obliged to write the notes following the NPA*

All: *Yes* (Yaoundé workshop)

A further probing revealed that teachers sometimes followed the NPA strictly in teaching certain aspects of the English language like reading comprehension but the overwhelming agreement was that they were generally resistant to the NPA. Following this revelation it was necessary to investigate further, those contextual constraints that militated against teachers' practice of the NPA in their English language lessons. I wanted to know what according to teachers was wrong with the NPA so as to better understand not only why they resisted it, but also what justifications they gave for alternative practices. A number of constraints were raised; I discuss each of these below drawing from participants' own words to illustrate each point.

5.2.1. Conflicting discourses about the NPA from inspectors.

Teachers revealed that one of the major challenges they had with implementing the NPA was the fact that they were having conflicting discourses from pedagogic authorities about the lesson stages and this was confusing to teachers:

***Buea1:** It sets a lot of confusion. Up to date some teachers don't know these various stages; they write because they want to fill their lesson plans; the stages, some are confusing.*

***Harry:** Why do you think is the reason why teachers don't know the difference between these stages?*

***Buea4:** We have been attending seminars; it is not the fault of the teachers, it is the way they represent the various stages. Because I realise that each time we go for a seminar, they keep on bringing these stages back, changing information.*

(Buea workshop)

The foregoing perspectives are consistent with my own experience as pedagogic authority; at national level, there has been consistent disagreement between colleagues about the existence and relevance of some of the stages of the NPA in the teaching of English. This disagreement at national level seems to have spilled over to the regional inspectors who have been known to disagree openly during training workshops. The range of terminologies used by pedagogic authorities across the country is so diverse that it is difficult to pin down a consistent discourse representing the stages of the NPA.

An example is the confusion between the *evaluation* and *reinvestment* stages of a lesson:

What we learned in a seminar was that either you reinvest or you evaluate, sometimes they even use 'application'. But for me, the word reinvestment is very confusing. (Buea workshop)

Initially when we started, I think they started all of this stuff with....before they came with the NPA, there was a concept approach. There was that one....they change the terms very often, I mean regional inspectors. So when they brought the concept of reinvestment, we used to have evaluation, that's a part where you ask questions from what you have taught. Then reinvestment was the area where you allow the children explore the lesson to bring out examples that are

similar to what they learned. But later on they (inspectors) came up and changed it and said reinvestment and evaluation are the same thing. (Yaounde workshop)

Teachers are left at the mercy of whichever inspector leads a particular seminar and the ideas they take away from one seminar may be completely overruled in the next seminar if, as is most often the case, the seminar is run by a different inspector from the previous one. With the only documented evidence of the NPA in English being the sample lesson in the Head Teachers' Guide, there is no doubt therefore why teachers generally agree to following the NPA in teaching reading comprehension. Yet it seems that even where their practice follows the NPA, their responses to the conflicting discourses lead to the generation of principles that are legitimate to their own understandings. The excerpt below is a follow up to the excerpt above from the Yaounde workshop which shows teachers' own perspectives:

Harry: *That is what they [inspectors] said. What do you think?*

Yaounde3: *What they give us is what we will take. For example, I have some seminar stuff here. The stages for the various lessons show that where you have reinvestment, there is no evaluation, so they have considered it to be the same.*

Harry: *If you were the inspector what would you tell teachers about reinvestment and evaluation?*

Yaounde3: *That reinvestment is not the same as evaluation; they should be separate. Evaluation is what you have taught in the lesson, you find out if they have understood what you taught by giving them an exercise. Then reinvestment is exploring the children's minds for example, if you're talking about - em - maybe some... [taking the clue from another participant] yessss that has to do with inferential thinking; the reinvestment stage. It may not point directly to the lesson, but it will have the idea of the lesson*

The perspective expressed by Yaounde3 above indicates that there is still no clear cut understanding of the difference between the 'evaluation' and 'reinvestment' stages of the NPA lesson. The conflicting discourses of pedagogic authorities have only helped to

further confuse teachers who, already grappling with other challenges, are forced to draw conclusions that may be misconceived. The NPA is generally built around the notion of developing an inferential mind in the learner, therefore associating ‘inferential thinking’ with the reinvestment stage of a lesson alone shows a limited understanding of the NPA as a whole.

5.2.2. Classroom/school-based constraints

In addition to difficulties arising from the conflicting discourses about the NPA, teachers also expressed practical constraints within the school/classroom context. These include large classes, lack of material resources like textbooks, time factor in relation to number of subjects taught, language background of learners as well as their ages

5.2.2.1. Large classes

Reference to classroom size did not generally emerge as a constraint for the practices of the 7 teachers nor did the workshop participants see it as a problem. It would seem that their current practices had sufficiently neutralised the effects of large classes to a point where they no longer saw it as a constraint. However, the constraints of large classes emerged in relation to two issues I drew their attention to, namely the value of group work as expressed by child participants and the use of the NPA as recommended by the MoE. Workshop participants generally defined large classes in relation to numbers, basing their figures on ministerial recommendations; the excitement with which they talked of the number of pupils in their classes did not seem to betray any feelings of being overburdened except when discussions were directed towards the practice of the NPA:

Harry: What will you call a large class?

Yaounde3: *I have 100*

Yaounde4: *I have 118*

Yaounde2: *I have 140*

Yaounde3: *A large class is any class above 55.*

Yaounde4: *It is an overcrowded class, because the number is above the capacity of the class. In the ministerial text, the class should be 50 per class, so anything above is large.*

Yaounde1: *I think a large class is in relation to the space available for children to move around freely.*

(Yaounde workshop)

In general, the constraints they raised were limited to classroom space, management and time factors. In relation to group work, workshop participants recognised the value of group work but preferred alternative practices (see section 6.1.1.2 below) arguing that the overcrowded nature of their classes meant that they did ‘*not have space in the class to form groups with the many pupils.*’ As far as the use of the NPA is concerned other issues were raised as can be seen in the excerpt below:

[...] Ineffective management. The children will be making a lot of noise and it will be difficult for the teacher to manage many children because the class will be large and children will be spread all over. So at times it becomes very difficult for the teacher to concentrate on all the children. Whereas in a class of 30 or 40 children, it is very easy for the teacher to concentrate on all the children and help them understand. You know that when you are teaching and one child distracts, this can eventually lead to the whole class being distracted. Because if I pinch my friend and she laughs it will attract other children and before you know it, the class is rowdy.

(Buea workshop)

In spite of the fact that reference to large classes emerged in response to the two issues mentioned above, it did not seem that adopting their own alternative approaches had completely resolved the issues of management they had raised since deviant behaviour could still be observed amongst pupils in their classes. In the classes of Alberto and Grace for example, I observed that some pupils sneaked out and in of the class while the

teacher was teaching; as one workshop participant in Buea observed of Grace's lesson, *'the children were running in and out because of their numbers.'* Although there is no direct evidence from the entire data set that the problem of large classes arises exclusively in relation to the use of the NPA, it is interesting to note that teachers use this as a justification for resisting the NPA all the same. When probed to talk about the same problems of classroom management in relation to their current practices, the focus was not on the challenges, but on how they had resolved the problem. Talking about her class of 68 pupils, Grace observes that:

I have now identified those children who are easily distracted and I have constantly changed their positions and have always given them a task in class to keep them busy...I think it is no longer a large class; it is an average class (Grace, SRI,)

Apart from resolving management problems arising from large classes, workshop participants also highlighted the generative impact of large classes on learning: *'Large class is a good avenue for slow learners to take advantage; they can converse with their friends and learn more'* (Buea1). As this was related to the appropriacy of their current practices, I will return to this later in this chapter.

5.2.2.2. Lack of material resources

The lack of material resources like textbooks and other teaching aids was identified as a major constraint that was also interrelated with other contextual constraints like large classes, time management, an overloaded curriculum coupled with multiple evaluations (also see Tante, 2007) and the overall poor classroom environment that the proponents of the NPA seemed to overlook. In response to the question, *'What is wrong with the NPA?'* participants in the two research sites expressed similar concerns as can be seen below:

Those of us in government schools, the didactic materials are not there; children don't even have books so when you start with the NPA you encounter a lot of difficulties. In a class with only a few textbooks, in the research stage...you cannot gather all the 140 children that I have around a few books. So the teacher is bound to do the work in some way. (Yaounde workshop)

The stages [of the NPA] are cumbersome and time consuming in terms of preparing and teaching the lesson. There are too many subjects to teach and there is an acute lack of instructional materials, lack of textbooks, classroom conditions, potholes in class, so many sequential evaluations; you cannot teach many subjects in a large class because you have to mark their books; all these make the NPA a bore. (Buea workshop)

The lack of textbooks meant that teachers spend a lot of teaching time copying out texts and practice exercises on the board. As Josephine put it, *'Another problem is the lack of textbooks, so we spend time copying the exercises on the board for them to do the exercise'* (SR). In most of the lessons I observed, about a third of lesson time was spent copying exercises on the board and it was during this time that classroom management issues raised above mostly occurred. Pupils generally copied exercises directly as the teacher wrote on the board or waited until the teacher had finished writing on the board before starting to write. As the teachers could hardly pay attention to children while at the same time writing on the board, some pupils spent this time on disruptive activities like throwing paper planes at each other, whispering across to friends or just sneaking in and out of the classroom. Such distractions meant that when teachers had finished writing on the board, they needed to get the pupils settled again, thus taking up time. No doubt teachers generally associated the lack of textbooks with the problem of time management:

My first problem with the NPA is that [...] it is time consuming in the classroom situation. The NPA has been adopted from model schools but when you bring it to our own local level where the children don't even have textbooks or other materials and classrooms don't have any equipment then it becomes very difficult for us to use it. (Yaounde workshop)

5.2.2.3. Overloaded curriculum and assessments

Research participants also expressed concerns about the number of subjects in the curriculum. The fact that they were required to teach many subjects in a day; the fact that each of the subjects taught had to be accompanied by an evaluation exercise marked by the teacher meant that teachers of large classes spent the whole day marking exercise books:

I can say our policy makers are coming up with many new subjects now. In those days we used to have Civics, now we have Human Rights, Moral Education and Civic Education. Now we have about 13 subjects for these children and if a teacher has to teach one lesson following all the stages [of the NPA], I bet you we will not be able to teach 3 successful lessons a day. Again just like my colleague said a while ago, we teach very large classes so if we have to evaluate following the NPA we have to move round the class and look at each child's work and mark all books which is very impossible if you have a large class. (Yaounde workshop)

The constraints imposed by the multiplicity of subjects teachers have to teach everyday was further supported by individual teachers as can be seen in this SR excerpt:

Harry: *You have to teach 9 lessons in a day? Do you always teach these?*

George: *No, we may teach 5.*

Harry: *What makes it impossible to teach all the 9 lessons?*

George: *Because we put marking and copying out questions on the board into our teaching time.*

Apart from having to mark classroom exercises, the sequential testing system also constituted a challenge for teachers:

We have a 5 weeks teaching programme and the 6th week is for evaluation and by the 5th week you have to be setting exam questions. So if you have not finished the programme, you have to hasten up teaching and the NPA has no place now, and we become teacher-centred because you will be assessed on how much you have covered not how well you have covered the little you have covered. The people who correct lesson notes follow the scheme of work set, not what you have been teaching in class. So they will not say you have done this very well or poorly, they say you are supposed to be teaching content for week 1 or 2. (Yaoundé workshop)

The issues raised in the foregoing excerpt are further compounded by an additional regional ‘mock’ examination meant to prepare final year students for certificate examinations as well as the resulting paperwork for each of these assessment sessions:

I want to differ from what the state requires us to do. We examination class teachers have a lot to do because we have the regional mock exams before the real exams and so from the very beginning of the year, we have to work hard to cover the programme that extends to May although the mock is written in March. (Yaoundé workshop)

Our bosses also make teaching difficult; there are many papers to fill at all times; report cards, result analysis sheets per subject, programme coverage sheets, performance statistics per subject, per sex, age, all of these are very cumbersome and you can't be doing this, producing four copies and preparing lessons. This is the head teacher's work but they give it to the teachers. We spend more time on evaluation than in formal teaching. (Yaoundé workshop)

5.2.3. Macro-constraints

Workshop participants and the 7 cases also identified constraints that were not directly school-based but affected the school in many ways. Amongst these were socio-economic and linguistic influences which were particular to each of the research sites. In Buea, parental poverty and negligence was identified as affecting pupils and consequently teaching in state schools. It was common practice for children to do household chores before school and to be involved in economic activities after school:

Some of them [pupils] get up early in the morning in order to do all the household chores before going to school. They cook, mop the floor, so by the time the child is going to school; he/she is very tired. So one of the difficulties to teaching comes from the children themselves and it is because of their parents. (Alberto SR)

This was further confirmed by workshop participants:

Most of the children are very slow because they don't understand fast. There are so many reasons: some children are slow due to their background. Their parents are nonchalant about their studies, what they eat or wear and this makes the children to be slow learners with no self-confidence. They do not behave well in school; sometimes they are sleeping. They have to work for

people at odd hours in order to have some money to be able to feed themselves or pay their fees. So when they come to school, they can't participate in class. (Buea workshop)

There were several stories of children involved in petit trading after school in Buea; in my evening walks there, I occasionally met children from the classes I was observing, including some of the child-participants selling things like peanuts, roasted plantains, and assorted vegetables by the road sides. Two of my research participants from Josephine's school particularly struck me. The first (JosephineB2) spent the evenings selling different items including cigarettes, and telephone top up cards just in front of a noisy pub by the entrance to the University of Buea. Some evenings, I chatted with him and he did not seem to see this as affecting his education. The second one (JosephineB4) seized the opportunity I offered them, at the end of the focus group interview to ask me questions and recounted a pathetic story about living conditions in their home and why he and his younger sister were now in the same class. His father had abandoned them for his second wife and he was visibly worried about his future in a secondary school and had expressed this even to his teacher, Josephine. Further discussions with Josephine and the head teacher led to an agreement to invite both parents to school for a chat with me. Despite attempts to be friendly and supportive with both parents on the phone, only JosephineB4's mother came and as such, I was unable to get the full parental consent I needed to be able to support his education. This meant that JosephineB4 and his younger siblings would continue helping their mother to sell food stuff around the Buea motor park and other popular areas in town when their peers are sleeping or studying.

Participants also raised the lack of commitment on the part of students to attend remedial classes organised after sequential evaluations: *'The moment they discover that they have*

written the sequence test, they stay away at home meanwhile it is that period which the teacher can use to help weaker students.' While this lack of commitment to the school programme can partly be attributed to parental negligence, the fact remains that it does affect teaching adversely. The consequence is that while pedagogic authorities may not consider societal influences on children, teachers get to grapple with the difficulties that children from such societies bring to the classroom on a daily bases.

A further issue raised was the largely heterogeneous nature of the Cameroonian educational landscape; the huge dichotomy between urban and rural public schools in terms of number of available teachers, resources, exposure to media and target language as well as economic factors. Teachers questioned the principle of defining a one-size-fits-all pedagogic policy in a country where micro and macro factors influencing classroom realities between urban and rural schools are so different. Some of the teachers reported previous experiences of working in rural schools where *'children have never seen a TV and cannot speak English; they have never seen a trained teacher. I think we need to consider all of these factors when we define policy.'* They expressed the need for policy makers to engage *'with the different realities of the country'*; to consider the realities of specific contexts so as to arrive at a national policy that recognises these inherent differences.

In Yaounde, teachers expressed constraints emanating from the influence of French language but as is the case with other constraints presented above, this was mostly in relation to discussions about the NPA; in reference to their current practices, they claimed to be overcoming the challenges or where such challenges still occurred strongly, they blamed it on teachers of the earlier classes. In all there were 223 pupils in

the three classes observed in Yaounde, and of these, 85% were from French speaking homes. The four *Cases* and workshop participants all affirmed that this was a constraint in the sense that the classroom was the only place where children expressed themselves in English: *'Here [in Yaounde] for example, we understand that when children go home, they speak French with their parents, so we tend to make them talk a lot [in English] in school'* (Yaounde workshop). Some of these children came from homes where their other siblings attended French medium schools and because their parents were Francophones, it was difficult for them to practice their English at home. Even in school the language of the playground was mostly French and as such even children from English speaking homes were being influenced by the pervasive presence of French language. Ivo expressed his disapproval of the NPA in the following terms:

I think these people [inspectors] are completely ignorant of what we live in our classes every day. They think that this is Bamenda [an English speaking town] where children hear people speaking English every day. Here the language on the streets and at home is French and most of our children are from francophone homes. When you start following this NPA thing, you reach a stage where they do not even understand what you are saying; how do you expect them to think properly in a language they can barely understand? (Ivo, SR)

In the workshop discussions in both research sites, teachers identified a significant difference between the pedagogic practices of teachers in Yaounde and their colleagues in Buea, a difference which they associated with the language background of learners in both sites. As this difference was related to their perceptions of what was contextually appropriate in one site and not in the other as well as in the teachers' own current pedagogic practices, I will return to it in chapter seven.

5.3. From NPA to context appropriacy: a developing Pedagogic hybridity

The constraints presented above give the false impression that the NPA was completely rejected by teachers. This is not the case at all; although only one of the 7 teachers strictly followed the stages of the NPA, it was clear from the discussions that teachers perceived the NPA positively if not in terms of the cumbersome and confusing lesson stages associated with it, at least for the fundamental principles of learner-centredness it aimed to achieve:

I think the NPA has done one significant thing. There are times, when we were doing the 3 stages [lesson plans] that we just gave the definition of something and we get into a discussion. But now you do some kind of guiding talk; you get words from the children that you use to build the lesson. That is around the verification of hypotheses before you come to the synthesis where you come out with full notes. Now we build the lesson with the help of the children. (Yaounde workshop)

Although teachers generally agreed with the perspectives expressed above, the idea that Learner-centred teaching was a distinct feature of the NPA was quickly challenged by one teacher, so much to the agreement of all participants in Yaounde. The argument raised was that *‘we can still make our lessons learner-centred while using the three-stage lesson notes; I do not agree that it is only the NPA which is learner-centred.’* Participants went on to argue that it was possible to follow the NPA and still be heavily teacher-centred and referred to their own experiences of lessons where students were unable to participate in some stages of the lesson forcing the teacher to act as knowledge provider, dominating talking time. The general consensus was for a policy on pedagogy that took into consideration the ecological/social heterogeneity of the country. To achieve this, policy makers needed to:

‘... start from the teachers; [...] bring teachers [...] to raise their problems and suggest how they [teachers] think they can overcome these problems. Then we can make a national policy on education and make room for adapting it to

different contexts. We need a kind of decentralisation of implementation [of policy]. (Yaounde workshop)

To these teachers, such a decentralisation would involve stakeholders like teachers, coursebook writers, parents and school authorities. At a methodological level, there was a strong insistence on considering environmental factors in policy enactment. As workshop participants argued,

The structure or the stages of a lesson have to be adjusted especially in language teaching. Teaching children English in Yaounde [francophone town] using the same procedure we use to teach Anglophone children, I think it is not fair because it wastes a lot of time and I don't think all the children will understand. There are some children who are Anglophones and they cannot say anything in French; to teach them you cannot just teach the way francophone children are taught. I think the methods need to reflect the language background of the children. (Buea workshop)

The method of teaching cannot be the same in both zones because of the language barrier. You need a lot of illustration and explanation in francophone zones but in the Anglophone zones, it is easier for you to use description, explanations without illustrations. (Yaounde workshop)

The need for adopting ELT pedagogy to context was further justified by participants who had worked in both francophone and Anglophone parts of the country. The following example from one of such participants summarises the point:

I taught in Kumba [Anglophone town] and when I came to Yaoundé, I realised that there are some words which you must lay emphasis on if you are teaching here. The first surprise I had was when a child told me 'what is a stone sir?' and the second was 'what is a grass?' we were talking about the Bahama grass. Those were surprises to me and I realised that these children have more vocabulary issues than the children in Kumba. (Yaounde workshop)

Teachers suggested a 'blended' form of pedagogy which associated ideas learnt from theories about the NPA (albeit not strictly limited to the NPA) with their 'traditional' form of lesson planning. In other words, the previous pattern of lesson planning had to

be maintained and enriched at a practical level with activities that facilitated more involvement by learners.

What I have noticed now is that we have something like a blend; we take those good practices of the old times and then we take the NPA and we blend them to present our lessons. (Yaounde workshop)

I want to say that this thing they call NPA could still be fitted into our old system of teaching and it could have worked. I know that what they insist on in the NPA is child-centredness and I want to believe that our 3 stage lesson could still accommodate child-centredness. (Buea workshop)

While the NPA may be seen as an ‘imported’ practice that does not fit entirely into their context, teachers still recognise some value in its discourse which can be translated into their own existing practices. The blend of their previous practices and the NPA seemed to have resulted in a hybrid pedagogy which, although not acceptable to pedagogic authorities, was considered appropriate in responding to the realities of the teaching/learning contexts within which they work. Their current practices, apart from responding to the challenges presented above were, according to them, also based on their own informed understanding of the nature and needs of their learners and context:

They [inspectors] try to force us through a procedure that we can avoid by using our own means from our understanding of the nature of my classroom; the backgrounds of my learners, the needs and difficulties of my pupils. I think it is my knowledge of my learners that should be the deciding factor in the methodology I adopt, not a set way of teaching. (Yaounde workshop)

The perspectives expressed above seemed to find expression in the actual pedagogic practices of teachers. In response to the challenges presented above and in anticipation of a possible ‘decentralisation’ of the policy enactment and dissemination process, teachers seemed to be developing a hybrid pedagogy that addressed the day-to-day realities of their working context. At best, they thought the NPA provided principles which could be incorporated into their previous practice and which could deepen their

understanding of classroom events. It was these current practices that were manifested in six of the seven videoed lessons presented to the workshop participants for appraisal. The next chapter therefore looks at teachers' consensus perspectives of what constitutes appropriate ELT pedagogic practices in Buea and Yaounde.

Chapter Six

Findings (3): Teachers and appropriate pedagogy: perceptions and practices

6.1. Introduction

In chapter four, perceptions of learners were analysed partly to provide a background for an understanding of the contextual realities within which teachers work but also to establish a database of learners' expectations which would subsequently be matched or contrasted with what teachers perceive and/or practice as good and appropriate within the constraints of their contexts. To achieve this, I have, in cases where teacher-generated data allows, developed section headings in line with child-generated features of good teaching. Chapter five on its part presented teachers' perspectives on the MoE methodological prescription and its applicability/inapplicability to language teaching in order to provide a basis for an understanding of the pedagogic choices/decisions teachers make as their pragmatic response to their contextual realities. This chapter sets out to address the second research question: What do teachers perceive as appropriate ELT practices within their working context? In line with the bottom-up approach that guides this study, it was necessary for me to elicit workshop participants' own conceptions of appropriateness. A consensus definition was reached at the end of discussions of the first videoed lesson in Buea when participants identified good practices from Yaounde that were not appropriate in their own context. Context-appropriacy in this study was therefore determined by a combination of three main factors: that a particular aspect of practice was considered good; that it was considered do-able; and that it was considered worth doing.

To lend some credibility and currency to teachers' perceptions in this study, videoed lessons were used as stimuli enabling them to generate even further insights into their own accounts of successful practice. This was even more relevant given the fact that the videoed lessons were taught by their peers in classrooms and with learners that were in many ways similar to participants' own daily experience. In eliciting their perspectives, this study also strived to answer the following sub-questions:

- a. What are teachers' perceptions of appropriate ELT practices?
- b. What are the discernible features of such practices in their actual teaching?
- c. What reasons do teachers give for their practices?

To answer these sub-questions, I adopt an across-data approach to presenting and analysing data related to teachers' perceptions and practice of good and contextually appropriate ELT pedagogy, drawing mainly from the focus group workshop data collected from the larger group of teachers in both research sites and supplementing these, with perspectives and justifications for certain practices expressed by the individual *Cases* in the stimulated recall as well as from my observation field notes. This is because due to the large amounts of data collected, there was a need to build around a specific data set and to draw from the others to expatiate discussions. The workshop data is selected firstly because it encompasses ideas about practices and perceptions from the data collected in phase one. Because in the workshops I inherently adopted the positions of individual *Cases* and their learners, drawing implicitly and, in some cases, explicitly from perspectives expressed in the SR and child-group interviews, it can be argued that the workshop group discussions reflected upon, and provided further insights to the data from individual teachers and their learners about good and contextually appropriate classroom processes and practices. Findings from the data (see table 8), have been

categorised into macro-level principle, micro-level activities, organisational and affective/personal-attribute features as well as methodological procedure, each of which will be discussed below.

Table 9: Thematic summary of teachers' perceptions of appropriate pedagogy teaching

Codes	Themes	Categories
Ideas and practices that enable elicitation/scaffolding/ creating a stress-free affection classroom environment/encouraging pupil active participation	Learner-centredness	Macro-level principle
Active classroom participation of Ss interacting in plenary/setting group tasks/	Group/pair vs whole class interaction	Micro-level activities
Extended T questions & successful Ss answers/asking Ss to stand up until they answer questions/asking inferential questions	Questioning	
T & S demonstrations/dramatization/exemplification, explanations, using S as examples etc/ production and use of local teaching aids and realia	Illustrative techniques & Use of teaching aids	
Telling stories/anecdotes/use of songs, rhymes and stories as stimuli/input for language exploration e.g identifying verbs from songs.	Creative activities	
Good use of songs, rhymes, flashcards and Ss to illustrate learning point/ reports of use of instructional materials and realia to good effect	Use of teaching aids	
'Integrated theme approach'/ incorporating other subject content in language lessons/drawing examples from other subject areas	Cross-curricular links	
Fair distribution of questions amongst students/encouraging shy/slow Ss to answer questions/giving students homework research tasks	Sharing responsibility with Learners	
Clarity of language analysis/avoiding complicated exceptions/categorising sounds	Subject content knowledge	
Minimising disruptive noise through quality of T's voice/asking students to repeat what their peers said in their own words/organising effective group work tasks/keeping lesson within timeframe	Classroom & time management	Organisational features

T's sense of humour/creating a stress-free study environment by using songs, action etc/mixing fun with firmness/taking corrections from Ss/praising Ss for good responses	Human/Affective practices	Affective/personal-attribute features
Ts write NPA lesson plans but in practice, they follow Introduction-Presentation-conclusion lesson format/T appraisals of these stages in discussions, e.g 'good revision'.	Traditional three-stage lesson plan	Methodological procedure

6.2. Macro-level principle: learner-centredness (LC)

Teachers were unanimous about the appropriateness of a learner-centred approach to teaching. In fact in comparing their current practices to pre-NPA practices, they thought that a major developmental feature of the NPA had been in the direction of helping teachers move from a heavily teacher-centred tradition to a learner-centred pedagogy that involved students as active participants in the teaching/learning process:

I think the NPA has done one significant thing. There are times, when we were doing the 3 stages that we just gave the definition of something and we got into a discussion. But now you do some kind of guiding talk; you get words from the children that you use to build the lesson. [...] Now we build the lesson with the help of the children. I think this is very good because children participate actively in developing their own knowledge. (Buea workshop)

The excerpt above suggests that for these teachers, *elicitation* is an important feature of their transition to LC. It was by eliciting words and ideas from students rather than imposing their own ideas, that they were able to achieve learning outcomes. This was evident in their appraisal of practices in the lessons of their peers that encouraged students to co-construct lesson content as was the case in Kingsley's lesson:

His ideas in the introduction were excellent; to do composition writing, you ask the children to come up with the ideas. The introduction was appropriate, because their best subject will be what they already like. So it will be easy for them to write about something they know very well. (Buea workshop)

In addition to elicitation, workshop participants and the *case study teachers* acknowledged the importance of student *participation* in co-constructing learning input

in the classroom as an important feature of LC. In comparing George's and Martha's lessons on reading, Yaounde participants thought George's lesson '*was more learner-centred*' and defined learner-centredness as '*when the pupils participate more than the teacher*'. A workshop participant in Buea expatiated on the relationship between learner-centredness and increased student participation in the following terms: '*I have taught for 23 years [...] formerly we used to do a lot of talking, but this NPA has introduced child-centredness. Now we encourage children to talk more...*' For these teachers, the practical application of LC consists of a change in the teacher's role from sole provider of knowledge to a co-constructor of knowledge with learners through questioning. In another sense, it implies giving students more possibilities to express themselves in the language classroom and using their own language as input for the lesson.

The videoed lessons of Ivo and Kingsley provided a concrete example of participants' perception of learner-centredness: both teachers helped their students to construct meaning through *scaffolding* and other interactive activities in different ways. In Ivo's lesson content was unveiled through extensive teacher-to-whole-class questioning based around a singing activity at the start of the lesson. It was in answering the teacher's questions that students were able to produce the grammar rules and further examples that made up the lesson summary on the board. On the other hand, interaction in Kingsley's lesson was predominantly pupil-pupil in groups, although initially in the lesson there was some whole-class teacher-pupil question and answer session based on their general schema of likes and dislikes. Commenting on Ivo's and Kingsley's lessons in Yaounde for example, five main features of learner-centredness were expounded:

Harry: *Let us look at the dynamics of the class. What would you say are the features of learner-centredness in the two lessons in this class?*

Yaounde1: [i] The participation of the children; [ii] the questions asked by the teacher and [iii] the fact that the answers were given by the children and [iv] the summary was constructed with ideas from children.

[...]

Yaounde2: [v] and the classroom environment is stress-free (My numbering)

From the foregoing, it can be inferred that for these teachers, learner-centred teaching includes the ability to generate active learner participation and co-construction of learning content through practical strategies like elicitation, scaffolding/questioning as well as other interactional and affective strategies that make the classroom a ‘stress-free’ environment for learners. The practical implications of LC as a guiding principle to their teaching were discernible from the videoed lessons and expatiated by teachers’ accounts of their own teaching practices. Although I present these features of their practice separately, it was made clear that they are interrelated in the sense that it is the interaction/participation generated through questions and answers that enabled the production of the lesson content/summary. What is more, as will be seen below, teachers’ understanding of LC seemed to guide their practices considerably.

6.3. Micro-level activities

6.3.1. Whole class versus pair/group interaction

In the workshop discussions, there were repeated references to classroom participation and interaction based on teachers’ appraisal of how well the *Cases* generated classroom discussions through questioning and also how students responded to different episodes in the lessons. A feature of classroom interaction raised was that of whole class versus group/pair interaction. Both interactional patterns were perceived as learner-centred by workshop participants with varying degrees of consensus on their appropriateness. An examination of teachers’ perceptions of three different interactional patterns throws light

on this. The interactional pattern in Alberto's lesson, for example, was essentially whole class with individual students appointed to answer the teacher's questions. This was perceived by Yaounde participants as 'learner-centred' because *'there was good classroom participation and the classroom was stress free'*. Buea workshop participants appreciated the same lesson on the basis that the teacher 'used the discussion method.' A second pattern was identified in Josephine's lesson on prepositions. Individual students were appointed to perform an action in front of the class and other students were appointed to say what action their peer had performed in complete sentences using the correct preposition. In Buea, participants thought her use of students as teaching aids to provide clues to her questions was appropriate because it encouraged not only teacher-student interaction, but also student-student interaction the result of which was the fact that *'pupils' participation was well generated and they really were actively doing things.'* In Yaoundé, participants found the same lesson successful in the sense that *'there was continuous teacher-student and student-teacher interaction.'* On the other hand, Kingsley's lesson was a combination of group work and whole class interaction; after answering questions individually, the teacher gave different groups of students a task to do within which period students collaborated in the construction of a meaningful text before feeding back to the whole class. Workshop participants in Yaounde agreed that:

The lesson was learner-centred because the children were really participating. The teacher acted more like a guide and the ideas came from the children. Each group participated effectively; this was very good use of group participation.

Other accounts of successful use of group work were reported by teachers in Yaounde and acknowledged and appreciated by students (e.g., George's students). As a participant in Yaounde explained, the common practice was based on whole class

participation, but in many cases teachers relied on group work to encourage knowledge sharing and language development amongst the very varied language competencies of their students:

Sometimes, you can see that the children are really struggling to understand you; you know most of them hear English only in the class; but when they work in groups, they help each other develop their own [English] language; all I do is to go round and ensure that everyone is doing something to contribute to the discussions [...] I have realised that when they work in pairs or in groups, they bring out interesting ideas and also help each other with language difficulties (Yaounde workshop,)

In response to my question about what advice they will give teachers if they became pedagogic inspectors, participants in Yaounde highlighted peer collaboration/interaction and the contribution of learners to lesson content development as essential in learning:

I will advise that teachers should guide children to do much of the work than the teacher. When children talk amongst themselves they understand better. The teacher should take into consideration the children's contribution to the language lesson. A good example is when the teacher in Buea [Alberto] used 'joining pronouns' instead of 'relative pronouns'

In Buea, teachers liked the fact that Kingsley split the composition lesson into small parts, focusing only on writing the introduction in one session; they also liked the fact that *'his ideas in the introduction were excellent; to do composition writing, you ask the children to come up with the ideas.'* Yet the consensus perspective in Buea was that while group work was good, it was not appropriate in their context:

If I were to teach that lesson, I would not have grouped the children, I would have made it a discussion lesson in the introduction where children share ideas about their best subjects as a whole class; so individual children get up and say which is their best subject and why they like it. Then I will ask children to use the different ideas of their friends to write about their best subject.

Before this lesson, I will start by brainstorming the topic, ask the children to give some points which I put on the board. Then in the introduction, I will ask them various ways in which they can write this composition. I will give an

example of an introductory sentence and encourage them to give different introductory sentences. Then we will chose one of the sentences and start building up our introduction. Then I will give them guidelines and from the guidelines they will develop their compositions. I will not use group work, we will discuss as a class. (Buea workshop participants)

In both research sites, Josephine's lesson provided the consensus approach to classroom interaction. Teachers agreed that it represented their current practice in terms of how they encouraged student-student interaction as the following excerpt from Yaounde suggests:

Harry: *Which of these two interactive patterns [Josephine's and Kingsley's] is appropriate in your classes?*

All: *We use Josephine's model.*

Harry: *Any reason why you don't follow Kingsley's model?*

Yaounde1: *At times when you give the opportunity to children, it creates a wild atmosphere, that is, the children become noisy. But it also depends on the lesson. If you give the children the opportunity to just ask questions here-and-there, it brings noise.*

Yaounde2: *I think that there are no constraints; it is just the teacher's negligence and wishing to have things move fast. So instead of saying that it is difficult, I would say it is time consuming. [...] It is not at all difficult; it is just because we neglect these things because we want to go quickly.*

Harry: *And why would a teacher want to go quickly?*

Yaounde3: *Because of the bulk of work; the pressure that the boss is putting on you and the workload you have.*

Teachers in Yaounde recognised the importance of peer collaboration and expressed ways in which Josephine's model could be improved to reflect their idea of what an interactive lesson would encompass, namely that '*teacher-pupil, pupil-pupil, and pupil-teacher interaction is continuous*'. To them, '*if student 'A' did the action and student 'B' gave the sentence and student 'C' identified the preposition in the sentence in her [Josephine's] lesson, that would be better interaction.*' Although they were generally inclined to practices that were akin with Josephine's lesson, they generally showed positive attitudes towards and often delivered lessons that encouraged peer

collaboration. Appreciating George's lesson for example, teachers commented that *'the fact that he made the children give definitions of words helped improve their vocabulary in the sense that they learnt from their friends'*. This strong awareness of peer-peer learning was recurrent in the discourse of teachers in Yaounde. On the contrary, Buea participants did not find peer collaboration through group work appropriate for their context; they thought it was not worth doing for various reasons:

Harry: *You seem to all be in favour of whole-class interaction, not group work. Why do you think that it is better to do whole-class discussions than to do group work?*

Buea1: *Space in the class; we do not have space to form groups with the many pupils*

Buea2: *Time is another factor; it takes a lot of time.*

Harry: *But we just watched a lesson in which time was well managed even though the teacher did group work.*

Buea2: *Yes, it is because he taught only a part of the composition. Here, we teach a whole composition not in parts.*

To these teachers, the lack of space in their crowded classrooms, and time constraints, make the organisation of group work a time consuming and difficult endeavour. Despite observing its successful application in another classroom with the same constraints, they do not change their perspective; rather they argue that in Kingsley's lesson, group work succeeds at the expense of completing a composition lesson. In other words, Kingsley is only able to teach a tiny part of the entire composition topic and this justifies their argument that it is a time consuming endeavour.

Despite slight differences in teachers' perspectives about the appropriateness or not of the interactional patterns presented above, there was agreement on the appropriateness of co-constructing knowledge with learners or better still, of using student input to develop lesson content. Whole class and group/pair discussions were perceived as appropriate strategies for engaging learners in the language classroom provided teachers

used input from learners in developing lesson content. Taking, as example, perspectives on two of the three lessons referred to above, workshop participants observed that:

[Kingsley] instilled confidence in the pupils by using their ideas to build chalkboard summary which also encourages retention. [...] He gave [students] the opportunity to write their work and he did not just decide to put up a chalkboard summary but encouraged children to read out their texts. He did not discard their ideas; rather he made them have confidence in themselves by accepting their essays. The final chalkboard summary was a selection of the children's own ideas and sentences and this all came from the children. (Yaounde workshop)

[Alberto] localised the content by using the word 'joining pronouns' proposed by the children instead of 'relative pronouns' [...] it is the pupils who brought out the topic of the lesson for the day. [...] He summarised the lesson with the children; he asked them 'what are we taking home today?' and the children helped him tie the lesson together at the end. (Yaounde workshop)

The introduction of the lesson [by Alberto] was wonderful; he didn't define the pronoun as such. [Students] constructed sentences and then came out with the target words, which means he built the definitions together with the children. At least even if the children could not clearly define the word 'pronoun' they could describe it using the correct words. (Buea workshop)

Other evidence of the use of student input in developing lesson content was observed across the other lessons and appreciated by workshop participants as good and appropriate:

[Ivo] was struggling to use the pupils' language, not to impose on them something they wouldn't understand, so he took from them, the exact words they used even though he would have used different words. [...] He wrote out the chalkboard summary with ideas from the pupils. He took corrections from children, showing that the teacher too is a human being and can also make mistakes; in this way the pupils were confident to talk even if they are wrong (Yaounde workshop)

We liked the fact that [Martha] wrote down everything that the children said about the picture; she did not reject their ideas even when they were wrong. [...] When the children had read the text, they were able to check some of the things they had said before and told her what to cancel from the board and what to add. I think it was good to involve students in this way (Buea Workshop)

On the whole, chalkboard summary was an important part of English lessons and these were always generated through an interaction between teacher and students, an interaction that was largely driven by teacher questioning and student answers. In lessons where there was no chalkboard summary (e.g. videoed lessons by Grace and George) there was extended oral review and repetition of the main concepts/rules studied in the lesson.

6.3.2. Questioning

In section 4.3.3, it was revealed that child-participants liked teachers who challenged them cognitively through questions, but also gave them opportunities to ask questions. Workshop discussions on classroom participation equally highlighted questioning as appropriate practice. In all the lessons I observed, teachers asked questions extensively; they seemed to rely on students' answers for the development of content, and as was argued in Buea, questions also provided teachers with information about student learning in addition to being a measure of the attainment of teaching objectives: '*When by the end of the lesson, the children are able to answer questions; it means they have understood the lesson, so you have attained your objectives.*' In all videoed lessons, questioning was identified as a feature of good learner-centred teaching. Teachers valued questioning as an effective way of making students participate in a lesson. Commenting on George's lesson for example, participants in Buea said:

There was excellent classroom participation because the lesson was dominated by questioning from the teacher [...] in fact the whole lesson was developed through questioning and the children were very happy to answer questions. [...] we loved the fact that the teacher exhausted the content of the reading passage through questioning; when it was time to read the passage and answer questions from the [course] book, the children had no difficulties because they had already understood the passage without even reading it.

It was also noted that inferential questions were particularly helpful in fostering learning. Comparing the reading comprehension lessons of Martha and George, teachers thought that while both teachers used questioning to good effect, the former asked mostly literal questions like ‘What can you see in the picture’ with little reference to how the picture images could relate to the meaning of the text. George’s lesson, on the other hand, offered learners an opportunity to relate pictures to the content of the reading text through inferential questions:

[George’s] lesson was very pupil-centred. He gave room for children to express themselves. [...]His questioning technique was good, he asked inferential questions, not just the usual ‘what can you see’ questions that are asked when exploring pictures related to a text. He also encouraged the children to construct good sentences. (Buea workshop)

A common feature of most of the lessons I observed was that at the beginning (and sometimes also the end) of each lesson, teachers asked students to stand up and after a few flexing activities students were kept standing. The teacher would start asking questions mostly about a previous lesson, on some related topic or on the content of the days’ lesson and students were only permitted to sit if they answered one of the questions. As I noted:

...students seem to naturally know that once they all stand up, each of them will have to answer a question before they sit down. So once the teacher starts asking questions, they scramble to answer by raising their hands and calling out “I sir, I sir”. It would appear they want to be the first to answer the teacher’s questions so as to avoid being the last to sit down. (Field notes)

Teachers found this activity very appropriate, explaining that it helped students ‘make an extra effort’ to participate in the lesson. Appreciating George’s lesson, Yaounde participants thought that ‘*the fact also that each pupil will sit down only after answering a question made all the children to make an extra effort.*’ Four of the 7 lessons selected

by the *cases* (George, Martha, Josephine and Ivo) started in this way. Following this up later with the *Cases* each of them acknowledged that this was appropriate practice:

There are some students who do not like to talk; they are shy. If I have to wait until they raise their hands to answer a question, they may never do so. So this is the only way I make sure that they must also participate actively in the lesson (George, SR)

In a large class like this, it is not possible for every student to be noticed, so some lazy or shy ones hide in the crowd. But when they know that they will be seen, if they keep standing up, they hurry to answer questions. That is why I make them to stand up. I want everybody to try and participate in the lesson, although I know it is not possible. (Martha, SR)

I have realised this [i.e asking students to stand up and answer questions] is a very effective way of making sure that as many children as possible participate in the lesson. Even if I do not finally appoint them to speak, at least they are actively thinking and looking for answers to my questions because they know I may appoint anybody. Participation is not only when they answer; simply forcing them to think and sometimes asking some to repeat the answers of their friends keeps them actively involved in the lesson (Josephine, SR)

My initial worry that students who were unable to answer questions might feel frustrated was dispelled by both children participants and the teachers. Teachers thought that this was already part of their classroom culture and as such did not constitute a problem to students. In fact, students who could not answer a question in one lesson were even more determined to provide answers in another lesson. Ivo's explanation summarises perspectives expressed by teachers:

[...] I am only pushing them to contribute to the flow of the lesson. It is part of our classroom tradition, so the children are not frustrated. Those who struggle to answer first do so because they want to avoid meeting difficult questions later [...] it is not because they are standing up that we can say they do not know the answers; I cannot appoint everybody to answer a question, so in the next lesson I start by appointing those who did not answer questions in the [previous] lesson. At the end, everybody has a chance to participate in the lesson in one way or the other (Ivo, SR)

In terms of the directional analysis of questioning, it was observed that this activity was heavily directed by the teacher. Hardly did teachers give students the opportunity to ask

them questions. Of the seven videoed lessons only Alberto asked students if they had any questions. There were, in the other lessons I observed, a few instances of teachers soliciting questions from students, but the predominant pattern was that teachers asked questions while students answered. Also, there was very little opportunity created for students to ask and answer one another's questions. Although student participants did acknowledge good teachers who gave them opportunities to ask questions, I thought it would be worthwhile raising the absence of evidence of such action in the videoed lessons so as to better ascertain teachers' perspectives of such practice:

Harry: *In the lessons we have watched, I noticed that apart from Alberto, no other teacher gave students the opportunity to ask questions. It seems to me that questions are always from the teacher; is this something you may want to comment on?*

Buea6: *There are many ways in which we encourage our students to ask questions. If you looked at the other lessons well, you would have realised that they [teachers] kept asking, 'have you understood?' I think in Martha's class when one child said 'No madam' she asked him what he did not understand and the child asked her to explain the lesson again.*

Buea3: *Sometimes a teacher can judge from the look on a student's face that he or she has not understood a point; or when we ask questions and they are unable to answer, we know that we have to explain things again. So questioning by the teacher helps us to diagnose student's difficulties; it is not just for the teacher's interest.*

Buea8: *What we do is that when pupils ask questions to the teacher, the teacher can throw the question back to the children so that they can help others who may not know the answer. When an answer comes from a child, it is helpful and easily understood by other pupils.*

As the excerpt above suggests, teachers' understanding of questioning is restricted and transmission-oriented; questions are assumed to be only about understanding of content provided. It is not however possible, given the limited time spent in these classes, to provide an informed opinion about student questioning, but there is evidence from both student and teacher participants that questioning was not only teacher-driven. Both

groups of participants seem to agree that questioning is both good and appropriate in stimulating students to think and participate in a lesson.

6.3.3. Use of illustrative techniques

A feature of teachers' practice that was praised by all workshop participants in both research sites was the use of illustration, which was generally perceived as encompassing demonstration, explanation as well as exemplification. Participants identified and qualified as appropriate, instances of demonstration in lessons by George, Ivo, Josephine and Grace. Commenting on George's lesson in Yaounde, teachers thought *'the demonstration activities that the children were involved in was fun but also made learning durable. I think that makes children to remember what they have learnt.'* In Buea teachers commended the fact that *'the method [George] used was demonstration, discussion and illustration [...] the lesson was very detailed especially in the explanation of concepts.'* Alberto's practice was described as *'demonstrative [and] illustrative'*; Josephine's lesson was appreciated in Buea on the basis that *'[students] really were actively doing things'* and in Yaounde, teachers thought *'the lesson was very demonstrative because [Josephine] used action to bring out what she wanted [students] to learn. This action came from both her and the learners.'* Ivo's miming activity which guided the singing at the start of the lesson was also very much appreciated in both sites as contributing to *'pupils' mastery of the main ideas of the lesson [...] because [students] saw him [Ivo] perform the action and also performed the action themselves, the lesson was very memorable.'* In Grace's lesson it was the teacher who used action to explain the meaning of vocabulary items; workshop participants thought in combining demonstration with explanation it was easier for students to grasp the meaning of the words she explained.

The foregoing representations of teachers' perspectives on demonstration and explanation helped me generate further questions about the importance of explanations, given that this constituted one of the features of good teaching identified by child participants. Teacher participants and the *Cases* themselves acknowledged the importance of detailed explanations but thought explanation would be relevant only when accompanied by demonstration. '*Actions are more memorable than just mere words*' argued a participant in Yaounde, an argument which was re-echoed by the *Cases*:

I have realised that when my children do a lot of action in the English lesson, they remember the lesson. So whenever I am preparing my lesson, I try to include something that will enable one of them come in front of the class to demonstrate something. (George, SR)

There is a saying that 'what I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember and what I do, I understand' that is my guiding principle; I want my children to understand, so I [...] integrate a lot of demonstration with my explanations. (Grace, SR)

Language learning has to be interesting and I don't see how else children can be interested in English if they are not actively doing things in a lesson. My pupils mostly come from francophone homes, so I have learned that the best way to make meaning of the English lesson is when they do a lot of action. This makes learning and playing complimentary. (Ivo, SR)

An additional dimension to demonstration was dramatization; teachers in Yaounde recounted instances in which dramatisation had helped facilitate student participation and comprehension. Teachers in Buea were impressed with the way George generated discussion around pictures related to the reading passage but wondered what he would have done if there were no pictures in the coursebook. I put this question to workshop participants in Yaounde and the responses all pointed to aspects of dramatisation like role play, simulation and miming:

...if there were no pictures, I will do a kind of dramatization activity; call out the children and give them a situation about someone who has collapsed in class and what will they do? They will give me answers like taking the person to hospital and then I will ask them to dramatise such a situation. After that, you can ask them how we call people who do that kind of thing and they will say Red Cross (Yaounde, workshop)

In some cases demonstration and explanations were perceived as closely linked to exemplification in the sense that exemplification shed more light to both practices. In Alberto's class, for example, the name 'Mbako' was used in several lessons; in one of the lessons, the teacher explained the expression 'to make funny faces' repeatedly and it is not until he made the sentence 'Mbako likes making funny faces when he is thinking' that students all laughed and started miming the action. Following up on this in the stimulated recall, Alberto explained that Mbako was a popular clown in the community with whom children usually played; he was known for being able to entertain with his face.

The fact that contextual clues, especially through familiar examples, brought meaning to the language lesson was also raised by students who appreciated the fact that their teachers drew examples from their own personal life experiences (see section 4.3.2.) Teachers in Buea recognised the fact that Josephine had made use of my presence in the class to provide examples of different positions in her lesson on prepositions:

Looking at the rhyme, it was clear that although the rhyme was about a 'she' it is clear that she was talking about you [Harry] in this rhyme. She therefore made spontaneous use of contextual clues; she used even you as example to make children think about positions (Buea, workshop)

In Yaounde, teachers thought an alternative approach to the same lesson would have been to make a few sentences about positions of things and

ask [students] questions to bring out sentences with prepositions and identify them. Then I [teacher] write 'prepositions of place' on the board and I explain what I intended to explain to them and write a few examples from their sentences and mine then ...move on to the evaluation stage.

They emphasised the importance of encouraging students to '*explore the lesson to bring out examples that are similar to what they learned*' indicating an endorsement of teacher-student collaboration in exemplification. Suggesting an alternative approach to Kingsley's lesson on composition writing a participant in Buea explained that:

I will give an example of an introductory sentence and encourage them to give different introductory sentences. Then we will chose one of the sentences and start building up our introduction

In the actual practices of the 7 teachers observed, explanations were very often accompanied by demonstrations and concluded by examples from both teachers and students, usually in the form of complete sentences. The identification therefore, of demonstration, explanation and exemplification as features of their practice that is contextually appropriate is akin with students perspectives presented in chapter four. Such a convergence of perspectives between students and their teachers not only justifies the appropriateness of the practice, but indicates an aspect of language teaching pedagogy which needs to be consolidated and developed.

6.3.4. Use of creative activities (Songs, rhymes and stories)

As presented in chapter four, findings from child-group interviews revealed that students considered the use of songs, rhymes and stories as good practice in language teaching. This resonated with teachers' perspectives in the workshop data. Participants identified as good and appropriate practice, the use of these strategies for teaching different aspects

of the English language. Commenting on Josephine's use of rhyme in the videoed lesson, a participant in Buea noted that:

I think that language is interwoven and the use of rhyme to teach prepositions is a very good innovation that I have learnt here. She did not limit herself only to grammar, she brought in rhyme to make the children so aware of the lesson. Unfortunately they did not sing it in this lesson, but reading the rhyme was good and you could see that the children were very excited.

The foregoing excerpt shows not only an endorsement of rhymes as a useful way of teaching, but also the teacher's additional endorsement of the place of songs in ELT. Josephine herself identified rhymes and songs as a major part of her teaching linking this to her own experience of being taught English by a teacher who was very good at using poetry in the language classroom. She revealed that because her students enjoyed singing, she had constantly tried to incorporate songs into her lesson planning:

My experience with children is that they love things that keep them active and stress-free and music is one of them. When I prepare my lessons, I try to find or create a song that can better convey the content of my lesson; that way, we can always sing the song long after the lesson as a way of revising what we have learnt [...] my children love it and I have noticed that it really helps them to internalise their learning. (Josephine, SR)

Further into the discussion, she said the rhyme in the videoed lesson was her own creation which she intended to transform into a song in another lesson. In addition, she reported having a collection of useful songs from different sources as well as of her own that she had collected over the years.

Ivo's lesson also received very positive comments from both workshop sites partly because of the singing activity at the start of the lesson. Commenting on the lesson, workshop participants in Buea thought that:

The teacher was very active, and only mimed the activity and the children took the clue and provided the correct words in the song. The irregular verbs he

used in the lesson came from the song; so the singing activity was very useful for the lesson.

In Yaounde, workshop participants noted that:

The song made the class very lively and active; the children looked like they wanted to go on singing and demonstrating. [...] We liked the way he connected the song to the lesson and the excitement with which the children responded to the whole lesson [...] it was a very good introduction to the lesson on irregular verbs.

Although Ivo and Josephine were the only teachers who used song and rhyme respectively during my observation phase, there were further accounts, in the workshops, of instances when teachers had used songs in their classrooms and how effective these had been.

Bearing in mind students' endorsement of stories as a good medium for language learning, I wanted to ascertain teachers' perspectives of the role of storytelling in ELT. Of the 7 teachers observed in phase one of this study, only one (Kingsley) explicitly used stories and anecdotes to teach language, although Josephine, Martha and Ivo reported this as their alternative practices during the stimulated recall. In one of his lessons, he told a story that illustrated the cunning nature of 'Dzibi' the tortoise who had tricked 'Ze' the panther into drowning in a pond. As he told the story, he placed emphases on words like 'cunning', 'vicious', 'dubious', 'deceitful' etc, words which were later used in developing a descriptive paragraph. Apart from this lesson, the only other stories were those from the textbooks which were meant to be reading comprehension lessons. Although in the video lessons there were no instances of teachers' use of stories or anecdotes, I raised the subject in the workshop and participant responses showed it was common practice. There was in fact general consensus in both

sites that storytelling was an appropriate and familiar activity in language lessons. Teachers explained that the best way to teach the simple past tense was to start with a story; the story constituted a reference point for analysis of verb forms and for sourcing examples of language in use. Teachers also agreed that asking students to write or tell stories helped them later make connections between the language items they had learnt. It was therefore appropriate for them to use stories in the language lesson, if not so much because *'storytelling is an integral part of our culture'* (Buea workshop).

A major criticism of educational policy in the Yaounde workshop was the fact that the textbooks recommended by the MoE did not make use of the rich repertoire of stories from the many cultural backgrounds of the country. As a workshop participant put it:

Look at the stories we read in English textbooks; it is either you read about stories related to the South West or the North West; we do not find stories from the North of Cameroon for example, how do you expect children in the North to enjoy reading in English?

This observation generated further criticism of the content of the textbooks teachers used but what was particularly relevant to this study was the fact that participants were able to share stories of how they made up for such imbalances. There was a general agreement that teachers could play a great role either by learning stories from other parts of the country or by encouraging students tell stories from their parts of the country. This, participants argued, was *'very easy [...] when you ask them to prepare a story, they usually ask their parents or grandparents [...] I have learned many interesting stories from my children'*. (Yaounde workshop)

6.3.5. Use of teaching aids

A recurrent feature of most of the lessons observed was the teachers' ability to draw from a variety of visual resources including flashcards, pictures, realia and students themselves, to enhance learning. In the workshop, these resources were variously referred to as 'instructional materials', 'teaching aids', 'didactic materials' or 'visual aids'. In this section, I use 'teaching aids' partly because it was the most recurrent terminology in the data, but also because it includes resources like stories, songs and rhymes as well as references to students' personal experiences and examples from local culture which can neither be categorised as 'visual' nor as 'materials'. Discussions of teaching aids emerged from participants' appraisals of videoed lessons, from reports of their own experiences of using different materials to enhance teaching as well as from discussions about policy-practice issues related to the availability and appropriateness of teaching aids.

In responding to a question about what they would do if they were given the responsibility of designing a language teaching policy for the country, a participant in Buea explained that she would '*study the different environments*' of the country to see what '*study materials [are] available there before taking a decision.*' Further on, after establishing the importance of 'environmental' materials in language learning, she concluded that '*I will ask teachers to use a lot of didactic materials of the locality and encourage them to work with the children to produce their own materials.*' This perspective was consistent with that expressed by another participant in Yaounde who argued that in the past, all she did was to use wall charts available in the class as well as pictures in the coursebook as teaching aid. This practice, she explained, had evolved and today '*...you must have didactic materials because different lessons demand different*

types of teaching aids and if you rely on the pictures in the book, you will not be able to explain everything to the children.'

To another participant in Yaounde, *'the question of creativity in the classroom boils down to the availability or not of didactic materials'* and although there were conflicting opinions about who –the school or the teacher – should provide teaching aids, it was evident that many teachers were making their own teaching aids rather than depending on the school authorities to provide these. A participant in Yaounde blamed some teachers for not wanting to be creative and explained at length how she was using local resources like *'plantain leaves to carve out different types of teaching aids [like] shapes and objects that children recognise.'* Another participant described a successful lesson as one which, amongst other things, made use of teaching aids explaining that *'when I have the correct teaching aid, the didactic material, and use it properly, I have no problems.'* In Buea, participants reported experiences of successful lessons where teaching aids from local resources were put to effective use:

I taught a creative writing [lesson]; this is where I get pictures from anywhere. I cut the pictures from newspapers and magazines and share them to the children and ask them to tell me anything they can see in the picture. I stress that they do not say just what they can see but what they think about what they see in correct sentences. Then when we have written the sentences on the board, I ask each child to construct 5 coherent sentences about the picture they see in front of them. (Buea workshop)

Commenting on the videoed lessons, participants in both research sites appreciated amongst other things, the fact that Martha, Josephine and Alberto all used flashcards to good effect in their lessons:

'...we appreciate the fact that there was a teaching aid [...] she [Martha] brought in her didactic materials. [...] The introduction was good; that is, the use of the word cards that are rare in our school. It gave her time to keep an eye on the children and elicit learning input from them.' (Yaounde workshop)

In the same light, it was agreed in Yaounde that Josephine's lesson made *'good use of classroom materials to facilitate learning [...]* *She is a very creative teacher; her poem fostered attention and learning.'* In Buea, it was the fact that her *'didactic materials were good, that is the flash cards and the way she used the chalk box and also the children to do things'* that received collective approval. The perspectives of workshop participants resonated with perspectives expressed by the *Cases* themselves who regarded teaching aids as an important consideration in lesson planning. Martha explained that *'when I start to prepare my lesson, the first thing I think about and look for, is the teaching aids that I may use to attract the children's attention.'* She noted that her students *'benefit[ted] a lot from visual aids in English lessons.'* Josephine was also emphatic in the importance she gave to teaching aids like songs, rhymes and *'concrete items'* that could *'keep [students] focused and attentive during the lesson.'*

Despite the general consensus on the need for, and importance of teaching aids in ELT and the appraisal of the different instances of effective use of these in the videoed lessons, I observed that, despite the expressed interest, by child-participants, to share the responsibility of generating teaching aids (see 4.3.4) these teaching aids were all produced by the teachers themselves and tailored to meet their particular lesson objectives. My observation was confirmed by workshop participants in both sites who expressed reservations about asking students to develop teaching aids. Teachers acknowledged making use of students' belongings like bags, books and clothing as illustrations for colours, shapes, sizes etc, but there was no report of any explicit involvement of students in designing teaching aids like the flashcards used in their lessons. Drawing from my understanding of students' interest in sharing the

responsibility for the provision of teaching aids, I wanted to ascertain the reasons why this was not common practice. The reasons given by participants varied from fear of blame to lack of awareness as can be seen in the two excerpts below:

Sometimes, if you ask children to bring teaching aids from their homes, their parents may think that you are exploiting them for your own interest. [...] our authorities think that it is part of our job to design our own teaching materials, so they don't provide us with enough didactic materials [...] they blame us for not being creative. (Buea workshop)

To me, the problem is that I don't think the children will be able to do exactly what we want them to do. [...] if I need a particular didactic material for my lesson, I know what I want, and it will take a long time to explain to the children what they should produce; so I prefer just to design my own teaching aids instead of complicating things for myself and the children. (Yaounde workshop)

The foregoing excerpts reveal a number of factors that militate against the involvement of students in the provision of teaching aids, despite teachers' endorsement of the use of teaching aids as appropriate in their context: fear of parental misunderstanding, expectations from school authorities, fear of administrative blame for lack of creativity, lack of confidence in students ability to partake in materials production as well as a desire to 'speed up' teaching by relying entirely on themselves.

6.3.6. Cross-curricular links

A recurrent feature of the lessons observed was teachers' references to other subject area content. This was most often referred to in the discourse of workshop participants as the 'Integrated Approach' as recommended in *The Syllabus* (also see 1.6.1) or the 'Integrated Theme Approach.' Responding to a discussion on the effectiveness or not of Grace's use of cross-curricular links in her videoed lessons, a participant explained that

I think if we look at the integrated theme approach which is a new development [...], it doesn't mean that you take an English lesson and only relate it to history or geography etc. You can equally take a lesson in English which will still be applicable to the integrated theme approach; you teach new words and use the same words for reading comprehension, for vocabulary and for pronunciation.

Responding to my question about what advice they would give teachers if they were given the duty of pedagogic inspectors, a participant pointed out amongst other things, that:

I will advise teachers to use the integrated approach, the cross-curricular links, not only depending on a particular subject but drawing content from other subject areas to teach language skills. (Yaounde workshop)

The forgoing perspectives show two dimensions to teachers' understanding and use of cross-curricular links in the language classroom: one is intra-disciplinary, that is, using content explored in one language skill or sub-skill area to enhance learning in another skill or sub-skill; the other is inter-disciplinary, involving the use of content in another subject area to enhance learning in the language classroom. Grace's lesson made use of the intra-disciplinary dimension by creating links between the pronunciation activities that constituted the lesson of the day and vocabulary activities. In George's reading lesson about the Red Cross, references were made to mathematical symbols, as well as to content from Citizenship and Moral Education. Workshop participants thought that *'the integrated activity [...] was great and the reality of being a Red Cross volunteer was very useful in linking the lesson to other subject areas and to real life challenges* (Yaounde Workshop). In one of Ivo's series of lessons on the simple past tense, he presented a text that had been explored in the History lesson and used it as a starting point for his language lesson. In the same light, Alberto and Josephine made extensive use of Geography, Environmental Science and Agriculture as well as Home Economics lesson contents in teaching different types of writing. Workshop participants identified

this as consistent with their own practices as revealed in the excerpt below taken from a discussion of George's videoed lesson:

Harry: [...] *are cross-curricular links do-able in the language class here in Buea?*

Buea1: *Yes, we do it very often. A lot of the exercises we find in textbooks now aim for cross-curricular links. I think it is good to be done because even if you teach reading comprehension, the passage can be from any subject and will help children understand other subject areas. Health education can be explored in a comprehension class.*

Buea2: *Sometimes when you have a passage in English, sometimes the topic of the passage relates to another subject so you need to bring the information from the other subject or link it to that subject, from known to the unknown so that the children create the mental links.*

Harry: *Should I take it that this cannot happen in a grammar lesson, for example?*

Buea3: *Yes, it can happen. Sometimes even in history or geography, we bring in grammar. They need to be able to relate sentences to be able to answer questions in history. We link simple past tense, for example to something in history.*

Participants recounted instances when they had effectively used other subject content in their English language lessons as well as instances where they had referred back to an English lesson to explain a concept in another subject. The consensus perspective in both research sites seemed to be that a cross-curricular approach to teaching not only language but all other subjects was justified by the fact that it was consistent with other practices/factors like the '*use of local resources in our teaching*' (Yaounde workshop), the variety of text/theme types in the official textbooks as well as the fact that as general subject teachers they were able to incorporate different subject contents into language teaching. As a participant put it:

The integrated approach is not very new to us, but the NPA has helped to legitimize and promote it. In the past, I used to naturally take examples from other subjects to explain a point in English, but now I make a conscious effort to create links to other subjects. [...] Another thing is that it helps also to motivate students who are stronger in certain subjects than others to participate in the English lesson (Buea workshop)

The foregoing excerpt suggests that teachers are aware of the importance of drawing on the strengths of their students in different subject areas to enable them take active part in the language lesson. This perspective was even made clearer by George who explained in the SR that his decision to draw references to Moral education (particularly the notion of volunteering) in his reading lesson was aimed at encouraging a particularly shy student to contribute to the lesson. The student had recently been involved in a neighbourhood clean-up campaign and had found great pleasure in explaining her experience to her peers outside the classroom. Referring to volunteering in the lesson gave her the opportunity to take active part in the lesson such that even after the teacher had explained that Red Cross volunteers ran the risk of being poor and losing their lives in a war situation, she was still one of few who insisted they will still want to be volunteers, generating further discussions during the lesson.

6.3.7. Sharing responsibility with and amongst learners

As pointed out previously in this chapter, teachers in Yaounde who favoured group/pair work activities justified their appropriateness on the basis of their potential to ‘*give students a bigger role in the teaching/learning process*’ (Yaounde workshop), noting that because of the paucity of opportunities for students to speak English outside the classroom it was important to encourage them to engage in group work because

when they work in groups, they help each other develop their own [English] language [...] I have realised that when they work in pairs or in groups, they bring out interesting ideas and also help each other with language difficulties (Yaounde workshop,)

Taking this point further, another participant in Yaounde explained that ‘*When pupils struggle with mastering something, I will expect the teacher to get the children who get the correct ideas to explain to other pupils who have difficulties.*’ This expectation was

acknowledged by other participants as appropriate practice especially in a context of mixed ability language learners like Yaounde. Concretely, in the lessons I observed, there were several instances where without necessarily doing group work, teachers asked students to explain certain concepts to their peers, a practice which, as was presented in section 4.3.4 above, resonated with child-participants' perspectives of good teaching. In one of Martha's lessons on 'speech work' for example, two students were given the responsibility of explaining to the rest of the class why and in what instances the letter 'i' was pronounced as /ai/ or /i/. Some of the experiences shared by workshop participants involved practices which involved more knowledgeable students being given the responsibility to help their peers as in the example below:

I usually group [students] in reading comprehension and ask them to select words which they cannot read. Then I ask those amongst them who can read the words to read for those who do not know how to read. Then in their groups I encourage them to explain to their friends the meanings of some of the words and the group only asks me about meanings they did not all agree on. (Yaounde workshop)

Participants also valued the practice of ensuring that not only the most outgoing students had a chance to respond to teachers' questions. Yaounde participants thought that it was good practice to 'give every child a chance to take part in the lesson' and appreciated the fact that Ivo 'made sure that the same pupils did not answer the questions; as there were many hands up he kept on calling pupils from different parts of the class'. Participants also found in this, an important motivational factor as well as an opportunity for shared responsibility in the development of lesson content as illustrated in the following excerpt related to Grace's lesson:

Harry: [...] are there some other good things about this lesson that we have not explored yet?

Bueal: Yes, encouragement of slow learners. In her lesson we saw that after asking questions, the fast learners could answer the questions, but she went on

to appoint those who were not talking to answer the questions. And she was calling them by name. She asked them to read the words on the board.

Harry: *Is that a strategy you will use generally?*

Bueal: *Yes, to encourage them to say what they think because they may be sitting quietly knowing what to say but being shy. In the class, everyone's ideas and opinion counts; whether they are shy or outgoing they have to all contribute to the learning experience. So the teacher needs to encourage them by calling them out to answer the question. So that was good.*

The foregoing excerpt illustrates how teachers generate classroom participation not just by questioning, but by paying attention to important peripheral factors like who is responding to questions in class. The underlying ideology that learning is a social event involving different participants whose opinions all count justifies their appraisal of Grace's practice of appointing less willing students to respond to questions. As Grace herself stated:

In my class, I know my fast and active learners, so when I ask a question and there are many hands up to answer, I look for those who are slow or timid to answer. Those are the people I call most of the time; that way, they learn to be part of the whole learning process (Grace SR).

A feature of Ivo's lessons that was identified in both research sites was the freedom with which students were able to correct the teacher's errors. I noted in my observation notes that:

In Ivo's classes, there is every indication that the students are very relaxed; although I have hardly seen him smile, it is obvious that he does not have a threatening personality. The children feel very free to go up to him and point out spelling mistakes and his reaction is always appreciative. Like last week, this week, there are two students keeping the class dictionary and from time to time, they check up meanings of words and spellings and inform the class. (Field notes)

In the SR, Ivo acknowledged this as a consistent feature of his lessons; he explained that the class dictionary was given to two students, 'language consultants', each week; these students had the responsibility of helping out with vocabulary explanation, and spelling

difficulties, not just during the English lesson, but for all other subjects. Workshop participants appreciated the freedom with which students interrupted and corrected the teacher as a positive human quality (this will be discussed later) but also saw it as an act of shared responsibility for learning:

We really liked the way [Ivo] made the children feel free and even motivated to correct him; we agreed that it is very good because it gives the children a sense of responsibility, it makes them realise that they too can teach the teacher and their friends. We think [Ivo's] strategy is very empowering. (Yaounde workshop)

However, the reaction in Buea was not as positive as in Yaounde; although they appreciated the freedom given to students, they were sceptical about the effect of such freedom on classroom management and the teacher's authority. They explained that a mastery of content was a prerequisite condition for good teaching and as such expected the teacher to be able to solve such language problems or alternatively, 'give the pupils homework to go and find out the correct spelling of the word and bring it to class the next day' (Buea workshop). This to them will allow time for the teacher to find out and generate learning in the next class without appearing to be ignorant. From discussions, this alternative seemed to be motivated by the feeling that Buea students were considerably exposed to English language and as such would not consult a dictionary as often as was the case in Ivo's lesson. This was confirmed by a participant in Yaounde with experience of teaching in both parts of the country:

I taught in Kumba [in the Buea region] and when I came to Yaoundé, I realised that there are some words where you must lay emphasis if you are teaching here. The first surprise I had was when a child asked me "what is a stone sir?" and the second was "what is a grass?" We were talking about the bahama grass. Those were surprises to me and I realised that these children have more vocabulary issues than the children in Kumba.

The foregoing explanation seems to justify not just Ivo's practice of making dictionary work a constant feature of his lessons, but also the extended attention to vocabulary observed in the lessons of George and Martha in Yaounde. In terms of the procedural aspects of their practices, it might be suggested that the reluctance of Buea teachers to the practice of assigning particular responsibilities to specific students in the way Ivo does is due to their belief in the traditional role of the teacher as knower. This notwithstanding, both groups of participants agreed on practices that involved appointing particular students to demonstrate or explain something in front of the class, a practice, they agreed was motivated by their commitment to learner-centredness.

6.3.8. Subject content knowledge

Discussions around language content and pedagogic knowledge emanated from the appraisal of Ivo's lesson. In Yaounde and Buea, participants noted that Ivo showed 'good mastery of the subject matter' with Buea participants adding that *'following the rule [illustrated with guidance from the teacher] the children could come up with the past tense of irregular verbs on their own.'* Although this was equally said of lessons by Josephine and Alberto, the crux of the matter was in relation to the fact that there had been reservations in Buea in respect of students' correction of the teacher's spellings. A perspective expressed in Buea however highlighted the fact that Ivo managed to keep close to the lesson content without being misled by examples from students that might have violated the categorisation of irregular verbs presented in his lesson.

When he talked about past tense in the revision and when he got into the lesson, he might have been distracted when the children gave the word 'write'. Some teachers would have gone into the exceptions for long (Buea workshop)

In the lesson, both students and teacher co-constructed rules for past tense forms of three types of verbs, namely (i) verbs with a vowel close to the last consonant sound (e.g. sit – sat), (ii) irregular verbs containing ‘ee’ (e.g. sweep – swept) and (iii) verbs ending in ‘y’ (e.g. cry – cried). It is in exemplifying the first group of verbs that the example of ‘write’ was raised and the process through which the teacher guided students back to conforming examples was appreciated by workshop participants. Participants in Buea commented that Ivo *‘was very organised with the teaching of [his] lesson, for example he grouped the irregular verbs into different categories depending on their form and the rules to change them to past tense.’* In the same way it was agreed in both sites that Grace’s presentation of two consonant clusters /bt/ and /pt/ in the same lesson provided a good opportunity for students to perceive the differences between their voiceless and voiced properties clearly. Participants in Yaounde for example explained that *‘the comparison of the two sounds made the lesson clearer to the children than if she dealt with one sound at a time as the textbook presents it.’*

In analysing both lessons – by Ivo and Grace – participants made references to the language proficiency arguing that a mastery of the language content itself was very important especially because English was also the medium of instruction for all other subjects in the syllabus. There was general dissatisfaction from both workshop participants and the *Cases* about the nature of language training: *‘the bad thing is that the way they teach us English in the GTTC [Government Teacher Training Colleges] does not prepare us to teach English properly in primary school’* (Buea workshop). In Yaounde, participants expressed the need for English teachers to *‘have specific language training especially in pronunciation’* and recounted anecdotes of lessons that were marred by the teachers’ poor pronunciation. No doubt therefore that in response to my

question pertaining to what would constitute a successful English lesson, participants mentioned, amongst other things, fluency and pronunciation: *'If a teacher is fluent; when speaking, his language itself is good and he pronounces words clearly...'* (Yaoundé workshop)

6.4. Organisational features: Classroom and time management

Discussions of organisational features of teaching were mostly in reference to classroom discipline and time management as well as procedural coherence. Classroom management was inextricably linked to discipline with the main disciplinary problem being that of noisiness. Although participants principally raised the issue of classroom size in relation to their disapproval of the NPA, the major problem associated with large classes was noisiness:

The children will be making a lot of noise and it will be difficult for the teacher to manage many children because the class will be large and children will be spread all over. So at times it becomes very difficult for the teacher to concentrate on all the children. (Buea workshop)

Good classroom management therefore constituted practices that minimised noise in class. Referring to Josephine's lesson, for example, it was noted that *'She had a very good voice and class management which was facilitated by active classroom participation'* (Yaounde workshop). The teacher's voice was perceived to be instrumental in maintaining a certain amount of classroom discipline. Participants argued that *'if the teacher is loud enough the children will listen [...] sometimes they make noise because they cannot hear what the teacher is saying'* (Buea workshop).

Apart from voice quality, participants also identified other practices that contributed to classroom management like appointing other students to repeat the responses of their

peers, calling them by their names as well as distributing questions fairly across the class. A common feature of teachers' lessons was that students who were unable to answer a question were asked to listen to the correct answer from another student and repeat it in their own words. Participants in Buea appreciated this as a way of keeping students attentive and quiet in class as evidenced in their appraisal of a videoed lesson below:

[Kingsley] emphasised pupils' correct responses and at times he even asked pupils to repeat the responses of their friends. This makes the children to be alert in class; if you know that the teacher may appoint you to repeat what someone else has said, you will try to be attentive to listen to what they are saying.

In the workshop data, there were also repeated references to the 'even distribution of questions.' The fact that questioning was an important part of their lessons meant that teachers needed to be sensitive to how they distributed questions in the classroom. An example of good distribution of questions was captured in the description of Ivo's lesson:

When he was questioning, the children were answering and he made sure that the same pupils did not answer the questions; as there were many hands up he kept on calling pupils from different parts of the class (Yaounde workshop)

This was seen as an appropriate way of maintaining students' attention and ensuring classroom discipline.

Reacting to an observation that in Kingsley's lesson 'there was good classroom management despite the number of children in class' (Yaounde workshop), I wanted to know what they meant by classroom management. Participants explained that:

He succeeded to put the children in groups and they worked effectively; we saw this from the results that were collected from the groups. [...] and there was

something like working noise because the children were all effectively participating. (Yaounde workshop)

The foregoing excerpt provides a nuanced opinion to the previous perspective on the role of voice quality in minimising noise. The reference to ‘working noise’ suggests that although participants agreed that noise is to be minimised, they were aware that classroom participation entails students speaking to the teacher and to one another and as such the absence of noise maybe impossible in a language lesson. This awareness was captured in the following excerpt:

We are often too carried away by the fact that there has to be classroom discipline whereby children listen attentively to the teacher and avoid being distracted. From the lessons we have watched, I noticed that the noisiest classes were the most interesting. You could see clearly that the children were scrambling to say something and that made it look like they were noisy, but the reality is that they were actively participating in the lessons’ they were making useful noise (Buea workshop)

Although classroom management was identified as a positive feature of Kingsley’s lesson, participants equally identified an instance of poor classroom management at the beginning of the lesson. There were reservations raised about his constant utterance of the words “stop noise” in the lesson. These reservations were raised in response to a participant’s argument that ‘*being a very large class, at times you make the statement ‘stop noise’ to stabilise the class, because you cannot spot noise from different angles*’ (Yaounde workshop). In response to this perspective, another participant expressed the following perspective that was generally accepted in Yaounde:

But the children did not stop noise because the statement didn’t mean anything. [...] If I were the one, I would have given them something to do, for example they were talking about likes and dislikes. I could ask them to write two sentences about what they like and 2 sentences about what they dislike while I am writing whatever I’m writing on the board. By the time I turn round at least each person will be trying to write instead of making noise. This is what I always do when I have to stay on the board for a long time. Sometimes I may just ask them to write three sentences about something present or happening in

class and when I finish writing on the board, I appoint some children to read their sentences aloud. This way, I keep them busy and since they do not know who will be called up to read their sentences, they all do the activity. (Yaounde workshop)

The excerpt above was re-echoed by participants in Buea who also associated classroom management with the ability to minimise noise. This was because, as was mentioned previously, the lack of textbooks in these classes meant that teachers have to spend time copying out large chunks of text on the board during which period, students are likely to be noisy if they have nothing else to do. The practice described in the above excerpt therefore offers an alternative to Kingsley's practice in the introduction stage of his lesson where, he was obliged to repeat the words "stop noise" several times while writing on the board for a long period. The practice of keeping students actively occupied when the teacher is writing on the board is therefore seen as a less intimidating and more learner-friendly and useful way of jettisoning disruptive behaviour in the classroom.

Another organisational feature of good teaching was that of time management. One of the arguments against the NPA presented in Chapter Five was the fact that the stages were cumbersome and time consuming:

The NPA has an influence on time management; I would even say against time management because you cannot follow the NPA and keep to the recommended time for a lesson otherwise the children will never cover the content of the subjects. (Buea workshop)

Teachers were eager to complete the syllabus especially because their students were required to sit for two official high stake examinations at the end of the year. Practices that ensured effective learning, while at the same time saving time, were generally perceived as appropriate. Alberto was praised for 'good time management [because] he

went round helping [students during the practice exercise] and later he collected the books to mark them while the children were doing something else.' Equally appreciated were the approaches of Ivo, Grace and Josephine to managing the practice and feedback phases of their lessons. On the contrary, Martha's lesson was thought to have taken a lot of time due to her adherence to the stages of the NPA. Some teachers thought she spent a lot of time writing all learners' responses to the picture reading phase on the board where she would have accepted only correct answers. Because the focus was only on the positives of the lessons, participants tended to appreciate the lesson only in terms of its alignment to the NPA. The shortcomings of her lesson can therefore only be deduced from their perspectives on the NPA as a whole. There was disagreement between participants in Yaounde and Buea over the management of time in Kingsley's lesson. While Yaounde participants agreed that time was well managed in relation to the quantity and quality of student writings, participants in Buea thought that this was only *'because he taught only a part of the composition'* maintaining that it was not appropriate to spend so much time only on the introduction of a composition. As I have presented above, Buea participants reported practices that covered an entire composition topic in one lesson. Despite these differences in both research sites, there was general agreement that time management was an important component of good teaching, especially as this enabled them to attain the objectives necessary for official examinations.

Another organisational feature identified and praised by workshop participants was how well teachers followed the stages of the lesson plan, that is, in terms of the visible evidence of coherence in the unravelling of the lesson content as well as the organisation of content. Lesson coherence was associated with the stages of a lesson plan and

although it was clear that except for Martha's lesson, all other lessons did not respect the stages outlined in the lesson plans, participants still appraised these lessons based on their understanding that the videoed lessons were effectively structured according to their traditional 'introduction-presentation-evaluation' lesson plan (see section 6.6 below). So while Martha's lesson was given the merit of following '*the [official NPA] lesson stages chronologically*' this was the same for other lessons which were seen to have '*followed the [three-stage lesson plan] effectively*' (Yaounde workshop).

6.5. Human/Affective Features

Like child-participants, workshop participants in both sites recognised the importance of affective factors in promoting effective learning and identified activities in the videoed lessons that provided an enabling and stress-free atmosphere for learning. In Buea and Yaounde, participants variously described lessons in terms of the cordiality of teacher-student relationship, teacher praise and reward, teachers' sense of humour, and their impact on classroom participation. Participants noted that a positive affective feature in all videoed lessons was the fact that teachers rewarded students for their efforts by praising them directly or asking the whole class to clap for particular students or for one another. Josephine's lesson was commended on the basis that '*the learning environment was stress-free because teacher-pupils relationship was good*' (Buea workshop). In Yaounde, participants liked the fact that Josephine '*motivated the children by praising their efforts and asking the other children to clap for those who tried to answer a question*'. There was general agreement in both sites that George and Ivo had a very good affective relationship with their students. George's lesson was heralded as affectively successful partly because his

...sense of humour gave the opportunity for children to learn in a relaxed atmosphere. In reading comprehension there are questions when you have to give your personal ideas and this is good when children are relaxed. That is why his children answered all questions. So we can say the sense of humour gave an opportunity for children to highly participate. (Yaounde workshop)

In Buea, participants described the lesson as

...stress-free from the very beginning because he did the [physical relaxation] activity with them. His mode of teaching, he was talking and laughing with the children and this inspired confidence in the children; they felt they could rely on him.

Ivo, on the other hand did not smile at any point in his lesson but his miming activity that generated the song at the beginning of his lesson was seen as stimulating to learning, not only for its pedagogic value, but also because it *'made the class very lively, the children were laughing all the time and every child wanted to participate in the lesson.'* (Buea workshop) What is more, the fact that Ivo *'took corrections from children, show[ed] that the teacher too is a human being and can also make mistakes; in this way the pupils were confident to talk even if they are wrong.'* (Yaounde workshop) Although the explicit emphasis on dictionary work in Ivo's lessons was not approved in Buea, participants still found in his modesty in accepting corrections from students, a human quality that was useful to *'encourage children to take risks and make an effort in class.'* (Buea workshop)

Their appraisal of the affective dimensions of lessons notwithstanding, participants' perspectives especially about the 'friendly' role of the teacher was not straightforward.

They argued that

...it is better for the teacher to be the children's friend than for the children to see him like an enemy. This means when it comes to pedagogic matters, the teacher should mix teaching with fun and even when he punishes them, they will

take this as a friendly correction. In this way, children feel free to ask the teacher any question without fear (Yaounde workshop)

Participants admitted that a friendly attitude towards learners was important and praised features of such an attitude in the videoed lessons. Yet, they constantly associated correction with punishment promoting their perspective that punishment could be perceived by learners as a ‘friendly correction’ if the teacher is known to be friendly to students. Describing an ideal teacher-student relationship, a participant stated that

According to me, there should be a cordial relationship between the pupils and the teacher, but the teacher must have principles so that pupils do not take him for a ride because sometimes when you give yourself to them, they now lose respect and see you as worse than themselves. So I think that for the relationship between the teacher and pupils to work, you have to put up different behaviours depending on the situation. For example if something is wrong, you have to express the dissatisfaction, but when you are applying punishment you have to remember that punishment can either threaten or harden. So we select the type of punishment to be given for a crime committed. And when you give your principles, keep to them because sometimes teachers even violate their own principles. If you set a punishment for a crime, make sure you always respect it. It is good to make some of these rules with the learners; if they contribute in building up the rules and their head boy signs on their behalf, even the children will be able to tell you the punishment for every crime they commit (Buea workshop)

From the foregoing excerpt it can be suggested that participants see their role as constituting two components: providing an affectively enabling learning atmosphere but also ensuring that learners conform to cultural norms imposed on them by adult values. Although there is indication of learner involvement in developing rules for the classroom, it is clear that, for these teachers, the idea of a teacher as disciplinarian is still current. For them, the expression of happiness and anger are natural features of relationship building in the school context.

6.6. Methodological Procedure

Permeating the discourse of adult research participants were references to lesson planning and methodological procedure (see 6.4). In discussing their reasons for resisting the NPA lesson procedure, they seemed to agree on a three-stage methodological procedure (see sections 5.1 & 5.2) which they were already conversant with. No doubt therefore that the consensus in both research sites was for the incorporation of NPA-associated principles of LC and critical thinking into their existing lesson planning and delivery procedure (see 5.2.4). These principles were perceived to be attainable through the micro-level activities presented above, yet the constant reference, by participants, to '*our three-stage lesson plan*' made me feel there was something more to learn from these teachers about their preferred way of designing lesson plans as this seemed, from listening to them, to determine the methodological procedure for each of the videoed lessons. Probing further into the dynamics of this three-stage lesson plan, it was revealed that teachers' perceptions of good teaching were deeply rooted in its methodological procedure and coherence in lesson delivery. In what follows, I present participants' perceptions of the methodological procedures and internal content of each stage in the three-stage lesson as shown in the videoed lesson and draw examples from my observations of the lessons to expatiate these perceptions. Unlike the 6-stage lesson plan (see appendix 11a), the three-stage lesson plan (see appendix 11b) consists of an introduction, a presentation and an evaluation stage each of which includes a number of activities and actions on the part of both teacher and learners.

6.6.1. Introduction

One of the recurrent features of a good lesson expressed by workshop participants was '*a good introduction.*' Teachers reported that the introduction was the most important

part of a lesson because it was that part of the lesson which had the potential to attract or repel students' attention to the rest of the lesson.

What I can say is that in the introduction, that is where the lesson lies. When you have a good and powerful introduction, I bet you, you'll have a successful lesson. That is why we must take time in the introduction (Yaounde workshop)

In response to my question about what would constitute a good English lesson, a participant in Buea summarised this perspective in the following words: *'If the teacher has a good introduction; a good revision and links it properly to the lesson and if I see a triangular flow of communication [i.e. teacher-student, student-student and student-teacher interaction] and a good evaluation exercise, I like the lesson.'* In the discourse of these teachers, 'revision' (a terminology adopted from French and associated with the NPA) was an essential component of the introduction which marked the starting point of every lesson. As explained in Yaounde, *'a good English lesson should start from a systematic revision to the functional revision which has to be linked to the main idea of the lesson.'* Participants distinguished between 'systematic revision' (asking students questions about the previous lesson(s) to check understanding of key points) and 'functional revision' (asking questions or generating classroom discussions to elicit information that will help students grasp the current lesson). In their appraisal of videoed lessons, participants tended to pay more attention to functional revision as this was closely linked to the 'Previous Knowledge' stated in the lesson preamble (see appendix 11b) although it was also mentioned that *'systematic revision can sometimes play the role of functional revision'* (Buea Workshop). Ivo's lesson was selected as a good example of how a teacher could combine functional and systematic revision to make a good lesson introduction. Functional revision was seen by participants as taking the form of making students sing a familiar song which formed the basis of the lesson because it

enabled students to provide a list of irregular verbs which were later used as examples in the lesson. Systematic revision was in the form of asking students to define verbs as well as a recall of the previous lesson which focused on regular verbs and their past tense forms. Commenting on this, Buea participants agreed that *'the introduction looked at regular verbs and the transition to irregular verbs was very well handled and children actively participated because the teacher moved from what they already knew to what they had to learn in the lesson'* adding that the strength of this part of the lessons was in the fact that *'teacher started with a small exercise to make the children alert for the lesson. Then he revised the previous lesson which [...] the children actively responded to, before getting into the new lesson.'* Yaounde participants thought that *'he had a good introduction; pupils sang a song with verbs which he used in the lesson itself.'*

The other sub skills-based lessons tended to follow the same pattern as Ivo's: Alberto started by presenting flashcards with words which students later used to make complete sentences. The nouns in these sentences were later replaced by personal pronouns; a systematic revision of a previous lesson which enabled him make the point that there were other types of pronouns that could link up and shorten several sentences. Then he made his own pair of sentences and asked students to transform them into single sentences; it was when students had used their own 'world' knowledge of 'complex' sentences that they were able to identify 'joining pronouns' as another type of pronouns to add to their already existing knowledge of personal pronouns. Yaounde participants described this as a *'very good introduction [which] started with personal pronouns before moving to relative pronouns; [and in which the teacher] effectively moved from the known to the unknown.'* In Buea, it was agreed that

The introduction of the lesson was wonderful; he didn't define the pronoun as such. They constructed sentences and then came out with the target words, which means he built the definitions together with the children. At least even if the children could not clearly define the word (pronoun) they could describe it using the correct words.

In the same light, the introduction to Grace's pronunciation lesson was praised because it made use of students' existing knowledge of letters and their sounds as a means of eliciting from them the correct pronunciation of voiced and voiceless consonant clusters. From Josephine's lesson participants noted the combination of students' knowledge of verbs, nouns and sentence structures as well as their ability to demonstrate different types of action as the impetus for developing new knowledge

Kingsley's writing lesson did not have a systematic revision phase in the introduction; rather he started directly with a functional revision, talking about their personal likes and dislikes and linking these to football (a favourite subject amongst all generations of Cameroonians) before extending the subject to their favourite school subjects. Workshop participants in Yaounde noted that:

The introduction of the lesson about likes and dislikes was very good because it gave the opportunity for children to express themselves and also to make them know that there must be a reason for their choices. [...] he started from talking about things personal to them that is what they like or dislike. [...] In the introduction there was a checklist made by the teacher, from the ideas of the pupils

Although, as was discussed in section 6.3.1, Buea participants did not find Kingsley's use of group work appropriate in their context, they were unanimous that 'Kingsley's lesson introduction was excellent' because it started with 'what [students] already know' and as such, they were able 'to come up with their own ideas.'

The two reading lessons, notwithstanding significant differences, also shared a common pattern: both teachers started by a systematic revision of previously studied vocabulary items, some of which were part of the reading passage. Both teachers did some substantial picture discussion with Martha guiding students through ‘surface level’ questions to identify the ‘what’ ‘who’ and ‘where’ while George used a lot of rhetorical questions which encouraged students to think beyond the pictures and express ideas about and act out the scenarios suggested by the pictures as well as imagine what possible actions could precede and follow the situations presented in the pictures. In both lessons, however, it was students’ knowledge of the world around them (their schemata) in relation to the pictures that constituted the functional revision phase of the introduction.

A common feature of Yaounde lessons was the extended duration of the introduction phase which was generally perceived as good but time-wasting and therefore inappropriate in Buea. As a participant put it, *‘I think the methods need to reflect the language background of the children. What the Yaounde teachers did for the picture interpretation is very okay with them but for us, it is a waste of time’* (Buea workshop). In the stimulated recall, George justified the long duration of his introduction phase in the following words:

In my class, I know what exactly I want my children to learn, so I can take longer in the revision stage than elsewhere if I notice that the children did not understand their previous knowledge. Besides, most of these children are from francophone homes; even those from Anglophone homes speak French with their friends most of the time, so their vocabulary and reading is low [...] I have to spend a lot of time in the introduction so that by the time they read the passage they have already explored the meaning through the picture discussion (George, SR)

Other features of a good introduction to a lesson identified by participants in both sites were the *'use of flashcards'* the verbal and non-verbal *'relaxing activities like singing and demonstrating, [...] ask[ing] students to stand, stretch out, sit or jump'*, activities which both signalled the start of a new lesson but also served as *'wake up activities'* which *'motivate and keep the children alert to the new content'* (Buea workshop).

6.6.2. Presentation

The workshop discussions suggested that the micro-level activities discussed above were predominantly employed in the presentation stage, albeit with some being also important in the introduction phase of a lesson. In all the lessons I observed, the *Cases* formally announced the topic of the lesson after going through the procedure presented as constituting the introduction above. Workshop participants agreed that this was appropriate, explaining that

We start by asking guiding questions on their previous knowledge; then from the answers they give, we guide them to the lesson of the day [...] I think what they [Ivo, Alberto, Josephine and Grace] did was appropriate; after the children answer the questions correctly, you use their answers and ideas to construct the topic of the lesson (Buea workshop)

Participants in both research sites described this as moving from *'the known to the unknown'*. In the sub skill-based lessons, teachers generally followed an inductive approach, starting with a number of examples and through guided questions and student answers, helped the students to identify common patterns and suggest a rule. According to Buea workshop participants, a key innovation of this section was teachers' extensive use of guiding questions: *'there has to be a lot of guiding questions; the children come out with all the answers and that is one of the things the NPA is insisting on.'* In Alberto's lesson, for example, the teacher explicitly announced that the lesson of the day

was about a different group of pronouns (from the previously studied personal pronouns). Then he wrote five pairs of sentences on the board and asked students to transform each pair into one sentence. When he had written 5 correct student sentences on the board, he asked them to '*carefully examine the sentences*' to say which new words had been used to combine the sentences. Students identified the words and in response to the teacher's question defined them as '*joining words*', a terminology the teacher accepted and used for most part of the lesson despite writing 'Relative Pronouns' on the board. Although most of the content of this section was generated by students with the help of guiding questions from the teacher, the grammar point was quite explicitly addressed. For example, when students and teacher had completed a table of relative pronouns, the teacher re-explained what relative or joining pronouns were and how they functioned in sentences before asking students if they had any questions to which there was a general response of 'No sir.' The teacher insisted on students asking him questions and as there was no question, he asked them to promise that if he gave them an exercise, they were going to do it correctly to which they all said 'Yes sir.'

The other sub skill lessons were fairly similar to Alberto's: in Ivo's lesson the teacher stated explicitly that '*there are other types of verbs which do not take "ed" or "d" in the past tense*' before asking students to identify such verbs from the list of verbs taken from the song in the introduction. When students had identified these verbs, he asked them to say what this group of verbs was called before writing the title of the lesson on the board from students' responses. The rest of this section consisted of a co-constructed categorisation of different irregular verbs according to their forms in the simple past tense. In the SR, Ivo explained that

I wanted the children to be the ones to identify irregular verbs from the song and to make their own sentences with irregular verbs. My explanation was only meant to draw their attention to the difference between regular and irregular verbs and I think they identified irregular verbs correctly.

Grace's and Josephine's lessons followed the same pattern in the presentation phase, as the two previous lessons except that there were essentially deductive in nature. Grace explicitly explained the rule (for example that "b" is silent in "bt" clusters like in debt) before asking students to give examples of words with the consonant clusters studied in the lesson. Josephine on her part presented the word "prepositions" on a flashcard and asked students to read the word aloud several times before writing it on the board as the lesson of the day. Then she proceeded to asking students to define the word and accepted a student's definition of a preposition as '*a word that links a noun, a pronoun or a verb*' before providing her own definition of a preposition as '*a group of words used before a noun, a pronoun or a verb, to show time, to show place, manner or position; it is used to show the relationship between one thing and the other; it is used to show the relationship between a noun and a verb.*' The rest of the lesson consisted of co-constructed examples generated through an action-packed lesson with students appointed to place different objects in different positions while others made sentences about their actions using different prepositions.

The presentation stage in the skill-based lessons by Kingsley, Martha and George were consistent with their 'introduction' phases. In Kingsley's lesson this was identified both by himself and workshop participants as commencing from when he wrote a list of school subjects on the board and erased them a few seconds later:

...when I wrote the subjects on the blackboard, my intention was to present to them, the subject of the day [...] I wanted to let them know that they will be

writing about subjects; that is why I guided them to raise points that I used for the checklist which they used to write their paragraphs. (Kingsley, SR)

Students were asked to recall the words that had been written on the board as well as give a word that aptly describes all these words; when students had recalled the words and categorised them as 'school subjects' the teacher announced that the lesson was going to be about 'My best subject' and wrote the topic on the board. Students were appointed to talk about their best subjects and this guided the construction of a checklist and enabled students to generate ideas for their writing. This was followed by the formation of groups and group writing with the teacher moving round providing support where needed. At the end, each group leader read their paragraph in front of the class and received praise from the teacher.

The reading lessons were significantly different from the others in the presentation phase: Martha's lesson followed the NPA and as such it was difficult for workshop participants to analyse this lesson outside the NPA framework. As a participant in Buea said, *'you can see that she followed all the stages of the NPA [...] the emission and verification of hypothesis [...] the students answered the questions in complete sentences.'* A possible understanding of this excerpt is that the teacher focused more on form than on helping students unravel and interpret the content of the text. The presentation stage of George's lesson started when he announced the title of the reading passage and asked students to read the text silently. This was followed by the teacher appointing individual students to read parts of the text aloud while he corrected pronunciation and respect for punctuations before reading the whole text aloud himself laying emphasis on certain words and then asking students to read the text silently again in order to answer the comprehension questions. My understanding of participants'

perceptions was that in the skill-based lessons, the presentation stage corresponded to the while-reading/while-writing stage. This was confirmed by participants in both research sites:

The idea is for the children to read silently to check if their predictions in the introduction are correct and to find out any other new information that they did not predict before. (Yaounde workshop)

...in the presentation stage of composition writing and reading comprehension lessons, what we actually do is give the children a task, a purpose for the writing or the silent reading [...] to find out key ideas from the passage [or] to construct their own ideas in paragraphs' (Buea workshop)

6.6.3. Evaluation

The evaluation phase of the videoed lessons consisted of formal practice exercises or in the case of reading comprehension, textbook questions. Probing into participants' conceptions of evaluation assessment and practice, it was revealed that these concepts were all intertwined in their idea of an evaluation phase of a lesson:

It is actually a form of practicing the grammar points they have just learned, but we call it evaluation because we normally mark it and give marks [...] this makes us know whether or not the lesson objectives have been attained (Buea workshop)

The word 'evaluation' is only a name for this part of the lesson, maybe because of the fact that it has questions to answer which are corrected [...] I can say that it is a formative and diagnostic evaluation which helps the teacher to identify problem areas and to help slow learners. (Yaounde workshop)

Alberto's evaluation consisted of asking students to complete a practice exercise with the correct joining pronoun while the teacher went round helping students with difficulties and also marking their exercise books. Participants in Yaounde thought that 'his evaluation was very linked to the lesson and the fact that he went round correcting

[students'] books was useful.' Later, he collected students' books and invited them to do the exercise orally by identifying each pronoun and its antecedent while he wrote correct answers on the board. At the end of the lesson, he asked the students to say at least one thing that they had learnt from the lesson, and students said different things which helped them summarise the lesson. A characteristic of Alberto's lessons was that at the end of each, he asked them "what are you taking home from this lesson?" and as will be presented in chapter seven, this practice of enabling students' self-assessment was perceived as a part of what they had learned.

Ivo's lesson was evaluated through an exercise that required students to complete a table of irregular verbs by providing the missing form of the verb as well as compile a list of 20 irregular verbs and their past tense forms as homework. Josephine's evaluation required students to copy a teacher-composed poem/rhyme in their exercise books and underline all prepositions while she went round the class checking that students were doing the correct thing. When students had finished doing the exercise, she collected all exercise books and asked individual students to go to the board and underline one preposition from the text. For each underlined word, she asked the whole class if the answer was correct before asking the individual student to read the word they had underlined aloud. Then she appointed different students to go to the board and read out all the prepositions and others to go and point at particular prepositions which she said aloud. Grace's evaluation was a practice exercise consisting of 5 sentences including several words with the "bt" and "pt" consonant clusters; students were required to underline the words in which the "b" or "p" sound was silent and circle words in which the "p" sound was pronounced. When students had completed the exercise the teacher led the answer session in which students were appointed or volunteered to read each

sentence aloud and identify the correct answers while the others marked their peers' books. Workshop participants in both sites *'appreciated [the] use of contextual questions'* by Josephine and Grace (Buea workshop) explaining that questions/sentences that relate to familiar situations *'help the children understand better because they can use the language to talk about things that are happening in their own environment'* (Yaounde workshop). Additionally, Grace's use of 'contextual' and 'inferential' questions was generally praised in Buea and in response to my question about what 'contextual' and 'inferential' questions meant, participants explained that they were *'questions based on the context and lesson content, that is on the teaching of sounds. [...] The sentences were familiar to the children's context; they were not talking about the snow or winter.'*

In composition writing, participants explained that the evaluation consisted of asking students to write texts which were later marked and graded by the teacher. However, looking at Kingsley's lesson, participants agreed that it constituted an alternative approach to evaluating writing; when each group had read out their text to the class, two texts were selected on the basis of how well they responded to the checklist as well as providing additional information. One of these texts was written on the board and through teacher-guided whole-class discussion the text on the board was modified and enriched by drawing ideas from the other texts and also from individual students' ideas. It was this co-constructed model that served as a basis for other students to assess and improve their own texts. The teacher himself explained that although this constituted the evaluation stage of the lesson, it was only a

...provisional evaluation; it is in fact the conclusion of this part of the lesson. [...] when we complete the other paragraphs following the same procedure, I will give [students] a topic to write about; that is when I will be able to judge

how well they have understood the process of writing this kind of composition [...] that is the same procedure I followed for other types of compositions like narratives for example (Kingsley, SR)

Furthermore he explained that his practice was to encourage students to compare their own writing with the models co-constructed in class and in writing their own compositions, to *‘start by writing down a checklist and I make sure I comment on the checklist and the composition together.’*

The evaluation phase of reading lessons was the same: both teachers simply asked students to answer the questions from the textbook in complete sentences. Because Martha had to copy all nine questions on the chalkboard, it was not possible for her to complete her lesson; however, she explained to me during the SR that she was going to personally mark all students’ books in the next session as well as do a whole class activity in which students would answer the comprehension questions orally and justify their answers with evidence from the passage. George read out all the questions aloud while students shared the available textbooks; he explained further what each question required and in some cases, gave students some clues to how to reflect on and find the answers. This, as he explained, was in order to

...help and encourage [students] not to only copy out parts of the texts containing the answers, but [...] to reflect on the most appropriate way of answering the question without simply copying. [...] I try to encourage [students] to think between the lines and to be as precise and clear as possible in their answers [...] this is very important in their exams. (George, SR)

Although he read the questions aloud, there was no oral answering of questions; students answered the questions in their exercise books while the teacher went round marking their books as they completed the task.

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, teachers' perspectives of what constitutes good and appropriate practices of English language teaching have been presented under broad categories emerging from an analysis of the data collected from workshop group discussions and stimulated recall. The findings reveal that in terms of micro-level and affective features, there was considerable convergence but also some divergence of perspectives amongst teachers, but also between teachers' and students' perspectives of good practice. What is more, teachers agreed on methodological and organisational features of teaching.

Chapter Seven

Findings (4): Teachers' perceptions of research workshop experience

7.0. Introduction

This chapter presents findings related to research participants' perspective about the nature and value of the research workshop to them. It seeks to answer the third research question: What are teacher-participants' perceptions of their workshop experience of exploring insights into good/appropriate teaching practices? To answer this question, I use data from workshop participants' verbal and written reports of how their appraisal of lessons taught by their peers as well as their understanding of learners' perspectives can help develop their own teaching in context and eventually impact on their personal and professional development. In the first part of this chapter, I present themes emerging from workshop participants' perspectives on the current MoE approach to in-service teacher training in Cameroon. In the second, I briefly describe the organisational procedure of the data collection workshop for this study before presenting themes emerging from participants' perspectives in relation to the following research sub-questions:

- a. What is their assessment of the nature of the workshop?
- b. What are the perceived benefits, to teachers, of their experience of appraising lessons

7.1. The current MoE Approach.

In both research workshop sites teachers recounted their experience of the in-service training they had been exposed to. From their stories, it was revealed that although all participants were teachers in state schools, in terms of in-service teacher training

experience, they could broadly be divided into two groups. The first group of teachers were those whose experience of training workshops was essentially limited to the preparation of lesson plans. In the words of workshop participants in Yaounde, '*during our seminars we do only one thing; presentation of lesson notes...*' In-service training according to them takes the form of one or two day workshops where a large number of teachers from schools within a district inspectorate are tutored by invited regional pedagogic inspectors on how to design a good lesson plan following the NPA. Then teachers are split into specific subject groups, each assigned to design a lesson plan for a topic within each subject area. It is these lesson plans that are presented in plenary and criticised by all. As a workshop participant described it:

All they [inspectors] do is give a sample of how to present a good lesson plan. All they do is to look at what we prepare in workshops to see if we have followed the stages of a lesson on paper. (Buea workshop)

The second group of teachers were those whose in-service training experience includes not only the writing of lesson plans, but also a lesson observation and critique. During their workshops, teachers are presented with models of lesson plans and a group of teachers is assigned to design a lesson plan, usually called 'collective lesson' on a given topic/subject. A teacher from the group is appointed to teach the lesson in his/her class, while other teachers observe the lesson to check that it followed the stages as outlined in the lesson plan. In other cases, it is an experienced teacher who is appointed to teach a lesson, usually called a 'model lesson' which is then criticised by workshop participants. Describing the experience, a participant in Buea revealed that '*all teachers sit in a classroom and one teacher presents a lesson and we brainstorm on the link between the lesson plan and the actual lesson.*' Another feature of these training workshops is the fact that

the lesson is not even natural because, we [teachers] crowd the class and some of us watch from the windows; our presence distracts the children and even confuses the teacher, but all we do is see if he followed the steps in the lesson plan irrespective of whether the lesson was interesting to the children or not.
(Yaounde workshop)

The two ‘models’ of in-service teacher training described above were perceived by participants to pose a number of issues presented below.

7.1.1. Over-theoretical nature of in-service training

A recurrent theme that was revealed in both research sites was the heavily theoretical nature of the MoE approach to teacher training. Participants thought that there was a lot of focus on ‘ideas’ and very little on ‘practice’; they described the current practice as emanating from inspectors’ desire to maintain authority over them by ‘*imposing...ideas which they read from books as if these ideas were conceived to solve the problems of our context*’ (Buea workshop). Describing a workshop experience, a participant in Yaounde recounted that

I have been in a seminar with other inspectors; for one week they told us how to teach, but they were teaching us, not children. I asked them if they cannot come to the primary school and do it directly. I think they read some wonderful ideas from books and bring these ideas to us without thinking about how practical their ideas can be in our type of classrooms. [...] that is why when you challenge them to teach the children directly, they get angry.

The theoretical nature of training workshops was further portrayed in the emphasis on designing lesson plans rather than on teaching lessons.

[...] we have over stayed on lesson notes preparation such that when I go for a seminar now, I don’t really get anything because they come and tell us the same particular things and they only modify or further confuse the seminar participants with stages of lesson notes. Besides, it is always a big crowd of teachers attending and we do not have time to discuss anything except when we

get into commissions to draw sample lesson notes. They give us a lot of theory with no practical examples of how these ideas work in the classroom. [...] If they put us in a competition for lesson notes preparation, we will be first, but put us in the classroom and we have problems.

Even those teachers whose training experiences included the observation of a real lesson argued that such lessons were only meant to show a link between the lesson plan and the actual lesson with no room for creativity on the part of the teacher. As explained by a Yaounde participant, the purpose of lesson observation here is to ‘*see if ... [the teacher] followed the steps in the lesson plan irrespective of whether the lesson was interesting to the children or not.*’ There was a general consensus that what they needed was practical lessons, not just lesson plans: ‘*I think that inspectors should show us model lessons not samples of lesson notes*’ (Yaounde workshop).

The foregoing discussions show that while the current approach to teacher training may provide theoretical insights to lesson planning, it does not offer teachers the much needed skills and practical strategies specific to language teaching.

7.1.2. The top-down nature of in-service training.

Another theme that emerged from workshop participants’ description of current MoE in-service training was its top-down nature. Workshop participants were unanimous in decrying the failure of trainers and inspectors to take their own perspectives and realities into consideration, during in-service training workshops. Such a failure, to them, was reminiscent of the whole process of methodological enactment and dissemination. This process was described in the following manner:

They just sit in their [ministry] offices and sign a document [...] and send to the regional delegate who interprets it in his own way, sends it to the [district] inspector who also interprets it in his own way and then puts it on the teacher

in a manner that does not take into consideration the teacher's perspective. Everything is so imposed on the teachers as if the teacher has nothing to say. (Buea workshop)

Teachers felt that in addition to not taking their perspectives into consideration when enacting policy related to teaching, pedagogic authorities were forcing them to apply practices that they were unable to apply in their classrooms. In both research sites, participants raised the

...issue of policy makers bringing some of these policies and forcing them on the teachers and never following them up until during exams. They make money in trying to create new ideas and force teachers to do things and when the teachers are unable to implement these policies, they feel threatened and bully us. (Yaounde workshop)

Teachers recounted encounters with pedagogic inspectors in which the former had been treated by the latter as ignorant. An example of such encounters was expressed in the following words:

One came and spoke to me as if I had never had anything to do with pedagogy; that can be very frustrating and the more serious is that they are not interested in the realities of our school; all they want is for the teacher to tick their official boxes, they don't give advice. (Yaounde workshop)

This rather deficit perspective of the approach to pedagogic support by inspectors was later balanced by the same participant who affirmed that '*only one inspector has ever come to my school to do what I think they have to do; supervising and giving advice, not insulting teachers*' (Yaounde workshop). In both research sites, participants confirmed that they had occasionally benefited from interaction with some inspectors, but there was overwhelming dissatisfaction with an approach to training that did not only essentially treat them '*as children*' (Buea, workshop) but was delivered in ways that conflicted with the learner-centred approach required of teachers:

*They [inspectors] ask us to be learner-centred in our teaching but the way they teach us is very teacher-centred; they just tell us what to do and explain theories about the NPA; they do not give us room to discuss anything except when they ask us to work in groups to draw up lesson notes and even when we do this, it is only to apply what they taught us, not to create anything new [...]
In fact we are only robots (Yaounde workshop)*

Following up on the reference to group work during training workshops expressed by Yaounde participants above, I wanted to ascertain participants' perspectives of the pedagogic importance of such group activities. It was revealed that group work in such workshops was not collaborative between trainers and participants; teachers were left on their own to apply a contrived set of lesson steps to different topic/subject areas within the curriculum:

*During our seminars we do only one thing; presentation of lesson notes and we are never given the opportunity to be evaluated on what we have presented during our working sessions such that we even go back home without knowing whether what we have done is right or wrong. [...] Most of the time is given to lectures from different inspectors and very little time for group work; in the groups, we don't learn anything because we are often very confused; we only struggle to repeat the exact words on the inspectors' model lesson notes and we only change a few words here and there and also the content of the lesson [...] because if you try to put any idea that is not in the model, you will be criticised.
(Yaounde workshop)*

Once they [inspectors] have finished their part, they ask us to go away in groups and draw lesson notes in different subjects; they don't care how we do it, they only wait for us to come back and show what we have been doing in our groups. Most of the times only one or two group might be lucky to present their lesson plan. (Buea workshop)

The foregoing excerpts also suggest that because of the limited time given to the application of knowledge learned during such workshops, it is not always possible for every group to present their lessons in plenary. The result is that they go away filled with 'new' concepts and ideas about new practices handed down to them by pedagogic inspectors but with little or no idea how these are applicable in their classrooms.

The top down nature of in-service training is not only manifested in the dominance of trainer input over workshops; it is also manifested in what was described by a participant above as the teacher-centred nature of the training itself, an approach which ignores the potential contribution of teachers' own experiences to their learning:

...all those seminars are the same; one or two inspectors come from the regional delegation and start lecturing us as if we have never taught before. When you ask them a question all they say is that we should follow the new way [general approval] (Buea workshop)

It would seem, from the foregoing excerpts that, in addition to enforcing pedagogic ideas that are apparently at odds with teachers' own realities and experiences, inspectors' training strategies are also trainer-centred and consequently at odds with what they ask teachers to do in their classroom. This is because their training approach gives the impression that, teachers are seen as passive recipients of pedagogic knowledge; their own knowledge and experiences of teaching are ignored.

7.1.3. Judgemental nature of in-service training.

Another theme that emerged from workshop discussions was the judgemental nature of in-service training. There were, in the workshop data, numerous references to statements by pedagogic authorities describing teachers and their practices as '*resistant to change*', '*stubborn*' '*archaic*', '*stagnant*', '*teacher-centred*', '*traditional*' '*out-dated*' and '*wrong*'. Teachers recounted instances where pedagogic inspectors observing their lessons or assessing their lesson plans had ended up '*insulting teachers*' (Yaounde workshop) rather than advising them: '*One came and spoke to me as if I had never had anything to do with pedagogy; that can be very frustrating*' (Yaounde workshop).

Describing a recent workshop organised a few weeks before this research workshop in Buea, a participant revealed that:

She [an inspector] started by presenting arguments against the traditional method of teaching; she said most of us were still using archaic methods in our classroom, because we were either unaware of new methods or simply unwilling to accept positive change. [...] After a long lecture on the merits of inferential thinking and learner-centred teaching, she started explaining the stages of the NPA. (Buea workshop)

The deficit judgement of teachers' current practice evident in the foregoing excerpt is further revealed in the description of another inspector's practice at a previous training workshop in Buea:

The whole idea of his presentation was to show us that we were responsible for the poor performance of pupils. [...] They ask us to do 'remediation' in addition to all the work we do; [...] when I tried to find out at what time on the official timetable we should do this, he simply said we have to create time and that if our children fail, we are the cause.

In the excerpt above, the responsibility for students' failure is entirely laid on teachers; the solution provided is 'remediation', but as was mentioned in Chapter Five, teachers found the NPA stages cumbersome and time consuming and as such adding a further stage, 'remediation' to the NPA will only further complicate the issue for teachers who are yet unable/unwilling to apply the NPA in their classes. The excerpt also confirms an earlier perspective from the Yaounde workshop that teachers' challenges and their experiences of dealing with such challenges are often judged as insufficient:

During one seminar, I tried to explain that there were several challenges that made it difficult to follow the NPA strictly in my class...but the inspector simply told me I was a lazy teacher. I tried to explain my experiences and how I was coping with them; everybody in the seminar agreed with me, but we were only told that that is what the ministry wants us to do, so we must do it. (Yaounde workshop)

Participants who had only been exposed to in-service training that focused on writing lesson plans explained that during plenary presentations of their lesson plans, the feedback was often judgemental, laying more emphasis on what they had done wrong rather than on the positives of their lesson plan. This was affirmed by statements in Yaounde like *'mostly, we criticise the lesson notes,' 'we give suggestions on how to improve the lesson plan to follow the content of the stages very well', 'even when we agree that the lesson notes are well presented, the inspector will always have a correction to make.'* These assertions were also confirmed by participants whose in-service training experiences included the observation of lessons taught by their colleagues:

After observing a lesson, we are asked to criticise the lesson, to say what was correct about the lesson and what the teacher did not do well [...] if I am to say the truth, it is always the lesson correction that dominates; it is the problem areas in the lesson that we usually focus on, so that the teacher can improve next time. (Yaounde workshop)

Critique sessions generally look at how objectives are stated, class control, teachers' voice and whether the lesson followed the stages of the NPA. (Buea workshop)

From the foregoing excerpts, it seems clear that feedback on teachers' lesson plans and actual lessons is often dominated by negative criticism. Lesson criticism *'generally look[s] at how lesson objectives are stated, class control, teachers' voice and whether the lesson followed the stages of the NPA'* (Buea workshop). In these workshops, participants point out aspects of the lesson/lesson plan that deviated from the recommendations of the NPA and these are treated as inherently wrong. The essence is often to 'correct' the teacher, to point out what *'didn't go well'* so that he can *'improve'* on his teaching. Unfortunately, as the workshop data suggests, corrective feedback that

focuses on negative aspects of teachers' practices tends to ignite negative responses to new ideas and practices:

In our schools, we have teachers who say they have been teaching a particular class for 16 years so when they see innovation they want things to remain the way they have been doing them and they argue that their children have been passing exams. This is because when they [inspectors] bring us a new information, they make us feel like all what we have been doing is wrong. (Buea workshop)

7.2. The present research workshop approach

In developing the research design and procedure for this study, I was aware of some of the issues with the current training model, having worked in different capacities and interacted with teachers in different communities of practice in Cameroon. As much as possible, my research workshop was designed to reflect the current pattern of MoE in-service training workshops in terms of administrative procedure and duration but departed significantly from MoE workshops in terms of the organisational procedure prior to and during the workshop. In keeping with my paradigmatic stance of developing a bottom-up process, I started by seeking participants' consent first and the subsequent letter of invitation from the regional authorities only served the purpose of official permission of absence from school. Prior to and during the workshop, I used barrier-breaking interactive strategies including the use of first names, communication in pidgin and other non-verbal strategies like adopting an informal dress code. I met with all workshop participants one week before the workshop to explain the purpose of the study and to collaboratively plan for the workshop. Together with participants, a venue (from a list, shortlisted by me) and dates for the two days of workshop were agreed upon, a timetable was developed and an inventory of stationary and other logistics was drawn up. Two male and two female teachers were nominated to arrange for and order stationary and catering respectively in each research site.

During these meetings, I spoke predominantly in pidgin (a language mostly spoken by the un-educated but also by educated Cameroonians to show closeness and bonding amongst interlocutors) and encouraged participants to refer to me and their colleagues by first name. To facilitate this, I suggested that a rule be made that anybody who called me by any appellation other than 'Harry' would have an item of clothing taken off them; this rule, although not enforced, created a light-hearted atmosphere during deliberations. Participants constantly reminded each other of the rule and made efforts to call me by first name so much so that by the beginning of the workshop it had become common for everyone to call me and their own colleagues by first name. In a context like Cameroon where power differentials significantly influence communication, and where my status as pedagogic inspector was very likely to impose on me as well as on participants formal patterns of behaviour, this shift from referring to me as 'Inspector' (or 'Mr Kuchah', 'Boss', 'Sir' etc) to referring to me by my first name was very significant in establishing a non-hierarchical relationship with research participants. In the same light, referring to one another by their first names (instead of the usual Mr/Mrs...) enabled a mutual camaraderie that provided space for negotiating mutual understanding and also decreased the impact of the power differential between us giving them control over the agenda. One outcome of this was observable in the reactions of workshop participants when regional pedagogic inspectors occasionally stopped by to greet me. In Buea, for example, where the workshop took place in the conference hall of the Regional Delegation of the Ministry of Basic Education, inspectors were informed of the presence of their boss from Yaounde (i.e., me) and as normal in this context, 2 inspectors who had not had a chance to chat with me early in the morning, came to greet me in the workshop room. Once they entered the room, teachers stopped talking about the subject of our

discussion and it is only when both inspectors had left that teachers returned to the subject. From their reactions, it was clear to me that they were afraid to express their opinions in the presence of regional inspectors. Given that in the hierarchy of the MoE my role and authority is much higher than that of regional inspectors and that teachers would normally be more distant from a national inspector than from a regional inspector, this reaction, on the part of workshop participants reassured me of how successful the pre-workshop interactions had been in gaining their confidence and breaking the power barrier between us.

The actual research workshop was designed to provide a platform for teachers' pedagogic knowledge and experiences to emerge as the guiding factor for analysing the lessons of their peers. To achieve this, I made clear my role in the process: a researcher interested in finding out from teachers what they thought were good and appropriate practices in English language teaching at the primary level. I also wanted them to share with me and also with their colleagues, stories of their own successes and to educate me on those practices that made them such successful teachers. Although the *cases* whose videoed lessons constituted the basis for the workshops had initially been selected as 'good' teachers, I made it clear at the beginning of the workshops that the videos were only a selection from their colleagues and were not exclusive examples of practice. The lessons were presented, not as models, but as stimuli for generating discussions, amongst participants, about what counted as good and appropriate ELT practice in their context. I explained that for my research purposes, I relied on their experiences, as good teachers by their own right, to educate me on the positives of these lessons. They were therefore required to appraise these lessons and share alternative practices that had worked in their own classes. It was hoped that the discourse of the workshop discussions would be

instrumental in determining the deliberations and participants' perspectives. The shift therefore from 'lesson criticism' (a terminology which, as we have seen above permeates the educational current approach to teacher training) to 'lesson appraisal' was meant to enable teachers to see themselves and their profession positively.

To ensure that ideas generated from the workshop were co-constructed, participants were arranged into groups of five, sitting around a table. Each videoed lesson was presented entirely after which participants in their groups shared notes on what positive practices they had identified in the lesson; when they had agreed on these, each group presented their ideas in plenary. Plenary presentations were further open to discussions and my role was to moderate the discussion through probing further, and providing insights from the child-group interviews, stimulated recall and my observations that were relevant to the particular topic of discussion (see section 3.3.5.3.1). During the entire data collection process, I was interested in ascertaining how teachers reacted to a research approach which I had purposefully designed not to inform them as was the tradition in MoE workshops, but to be informed by them. In the following sections, I present findings on teachers' perspectives of the experience of participating in the present research data collection procedure.

7.3. Teachers' assessment of the nature of research workshop

7.3.1. Language specific and practical nature of workshop

In terms of content, workshop participants pointed out that this research workshop had the dual merit of being subject specific and practical in nature. As I have shown earlier, workshop participants reported that previous workshops had often focused on the NPA as a methodological procedure for teaching all subjects in the curriculum. Workshop

participants also reported that in most training workshops, emphasis was laid on the teaching of mathematics and the sciences and in some cases, English language was ignored:

I can remember from one seminar we had, I decided to present the English lesson we had prepared to see if what we had done was right; I begged and begged and begged and the inspector gave me one minute to go directly to the evaluation stage [of the lesson plan] and she asked me if my stages were correct. I don't even know whether the questions I asked in the research stage were correct; not even those of the verification and validation stage. (Yaounde workshop)

A few participants however acknowledged that they had received training on writing lesson plans for reading comprehension but thought a large part of their training focused on other subjects rather than the English language:

I have the impression that the NPA is only good for maths, science and reading comprehension. Anytime I attend a seminar, the examples they give us are only in these subjects, nothing about other sections of English language which to me is the main subject through which other subjects are learned [...] this is my first time of attending a seminar dedicated to teaching different aspects of English language[...] it is really great to me. (Yaounde workshop)

No doubt, therefore, participants appreciated the fact that the research workshop was language specific:

To me, the best thing about this workshop is the fact that it is about teaching different aspects of the English language. I have learned a lot about different strategies to teach grammar, reading comprehension, composition writing, spelling dictation and pronunciation [...] this seminar is so different from any one I have ever attended and it has solved my greatest problem, teaching English. (Buea workshop)

We have [...] learnt how to teach different aspects of the English language, for example reading comprehension; we must not do loud reading but do pronunciation in pronunciation lessons and mark ideas in composition, not just grammar [...] I am a complete teacher now because English language is the key; we teach all other subjects through English so I am happy that at last we were able to attend a seminar that focused on teaching English. (Yaounde Workshop)

Although the videoed lessons presented during the research workshop were selected by each of the *Cases*, the different lessons cut across different skills and sub-skills of the English language and, as such, provided participants with examples of language teaching in action. Even teachers who recounted that they had had the chance to observe their colleagues and comment on their lessons acknowledged that the present workshop was much more practical than previous workshops in the sense that they had been exposed to lessons taught under more natural circumstances than those of their previous training. They argued that the organisation of previous observation sessions made it difficult for the lessons taught by their colleagues to be natural, given that children were often distracted by the presence of several unfamiliar adults in the classroom. For them, the present research workshop was more practical because *'here we are dealing specifically with language teaching, so there is a focus and everything is practical. The other seminars end up on paper, but this one is very practical.'* (Yaounde workshop) This opinion was further sustained by statements, from both research sites describing the videoed lessons, like *'the children were acting naturally, even playing when the teacher was writing on the board'*, *'it was a very natural classroom with children running in and out'*, and *'that is exactly what happens in my classroom'*. The general consensus was that participants found the workshop practical both because it was based on 'practical' examples of English language lessons and also because it did not require them to listen to lectures about pedagogic approaches. This consensus perspective was articulated in the following assertion:

When I was first invited to this workshop, my feeling was that we will have another lecture on the NPA but when we first met, I was very happy that finally I will not be in a lecture but actually see teachers like us teaching in classes that are exactly like my own classrooms. I think this is very practical and concrete for me...very much like seeing my own class [...] The workshop was

also very practical because we were discussing concrete ideas about techniques which we can use in our classes and I learned a lot from the stories which my colleagues here told about their own successful lessons. I am very happy and proud that I was able to attend this seminar. (Buea workshop)

While it can be argued that this workshop was not meant to train participants on how to teach English, it is clear from their perspectives above that they found it pedagogically helpful because it responded to their need for further training on language teaching through concrete evidence of teaching in action.

7.3.2. Non-hierarchical relationship amongst participants

In both research sites, participants appreciated the non-hierarchical relationship between the researcher and themselves. This kind of relationship was facilitated by the fact that:

...the facilitator, though a national inspector, brought down himself to a primary school teacher that I am; he was indeed like an inexperienced primary school teacher learning from us. This made learning very simple and interesting. (Written feedback, Yaounde)

The interactional strategies adopted for the workshops helped in rapport building with participants. This, in a sense broke the power barrier that otherwise exists between myself and the teachers; they saw me as part of them and as such were able to express themselves freely and, in the process, develop their pedagogic knowledge. As a participant in Buea wrote:

It is really wonderful when a resource person takes upon himself to be on the side of his learners than on the “big side”. I have learnt a lot from these two days [...] apart from learning new methods of teaching, I have also learnt that the best way to make people learn, whether they are adults or children, you have to come to their level, think like them and support them. I think I will get even closer to my children now so as to understand them better. (Written feedback)

The foregoing excerpt suggests that rapport building, based on mutuality, with teachers has the potential to facilitate learning. What is more, developing a non-hierarchical relationship with participants facilitated a bonding amongst teachers which is necessary not only for mutual development but also for their own self-esteem as can be seen from the following excerpts:

This is the first time in my career that I attended a workshop for two full days and was not reminded that I have to follow instructions. I did not even feel at any point that there was a national inspector in this room; everything happened as if I was talking with my friends who share the same experiences like me.
(Buea workshop)

I think if our bosses considered us as Harry has done, there will be less dissatisfaction amongst teachers. For once in my professional life, my ideas and experience have been recognised and accepted by a national inspector [who] has shown us that our bosses can also learn from us. We are used to being treated like stubborn students [...] these two days, I have regained my confidence as a valued professional who should be respected not insulted.
(Yaounde workshop)

It is clear from the excerpts above that this research workshop was different from previous workshops in terms of the nature of interpersonal relationships amongst participants and that this created a stress-free atmosphere, an atmosphere of camaraderie through which teachers were able to develop and exchange ideas and in the process, develop self-esteem. The fact that the workshop was driven by ideas from teachers and not ideas imposed by a powerful authority was quite significant. The '*seminar enabled teachers to each express themselves rather than listening to the seminar organiser as has always been the case with other seminars*' (Written feedback, Yaounde). This was made possible by the fact that the usual constraints imposed by my hybrid personality were minimised, creating a non-hierarchical environment which enabled teachers' views to emerge.

7.3.3. Collaborative nature and value of workshop

Participants valued the collaborative nature in which ideas were developed during this workshop as well as the workshops' reliance on their knowledge from their experiences with learners rather than on knowledge presented to them by an 'expert' outsider. Participant argued that a possible solution to the issues raised in chapter 4 and sections 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 above was for inspectors to listen to teachers' voices in the same way that the current research facilitator was doing:

There are aspects that inspectors think are right, but if they sat in a forum like this one and then the teachers explain what they think is right, the inspectors can now learn from teachers and influence their own ideas (Buea workshop)

These research proceedings were facilitated by the dynamics of the workshop itself which provided an opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively in small groups to develop ideas together before sharing their ideas in plenary. This organisation offered an alternative to the traditional organisation of trainer-fronted classrooms where teachers sit in rows and listen to the trainer. Participants raised this as one of the merits of the workshop:

I think the seminar has been very enriching. In other seminars we do not get room for the kind of interaction we have had here. We have watched videos and worked in groups to bring out our ideas and share them in the bigger group so that things that we did not notice are raised by other groups and we learn from them. This kind of opportunity does not exist in the other seminars, not even in the practising schools. (Yaounde workshop)

I just wanted to say the seminar has been so enriching that we didn't learn just from the videos of lessons, but also from my colleagues here. (Buea workshop)

The excerpts above illustrate the pedagogic value of collaborative learning through group work: group work enabled participants to 'learn' and 'share' ideas within their groups, but also enabled each group learn 'things that [they] did not notice' from other

groups in the plenary discussions. Clearly, the organisational pattern of this research workshop facilitated interaction and as a result, enriched the scope of discussions and the generation of ideas. In their feedback, research participants appreciated the format of the discussions in this research workshop; they liked the fact that they worked in small groups:

What I enjoyed most was the fact that we were discussing our ideas in small groups; this avoided the noisy atmosphere we often have in other seminars where everybody is disagreeing [...] here, we disagreed and agreed in our groups and what we presented was what we all finally agreed on. (Yaounde workshop)

Participants also related the format of this workshop to discussions on the appropriateness or not of group work with young learners:

[...] we have been talking about group work in teaching and I am happy that Harry told us about what the children said about group work. [...] This seminar is a good example of what group work can make learners gain. I am sure that from the way we have exchanged ideas freely and the many ideas we have shared, nobody will argue against group work again [general approval]. Clearly we learn better when we share ideas in small groups. (Yaounde, workshop)

Providing a platform for research participants to develop ideas about their practices collaboratively seems to have had a positive influence on their learning and, as can be inferred from the excerpt above, on their future practice. The fact that the format of this workshop was related to an important part of the discussions on the divergent perspectives of learners and teachers in regards to group work showed that participants were capable of drawing not only from the content of the discussions, but also from their experiences and feelings as participants to inform their own practice. Also important was the perspective expressed by a participant in Buea that the collaborative nature of the discussions enabled her to relate her work to that of her colleagues:

I have a better awareness of who I am as a teacher now and especially of how my job connects with what other colleagues are doing (Buea workshop)

Collaborating with other colleagues in smaller groups and also in plenary through the free exchange of different perspectives, ideas and practices could help teachers make links between their work and that of their colleagues. This could in turn reassure them that their work responds to, or is in line with the expectations placed upon them.

7.3.4. Non-judgemental approach

In section 7.1.3 above findings from the data revealed that the underlying discourse of teacher training workshops in Cameroon is often judgemental and corrective, giving the impression that teachers' efforts always fall short of what is expected of them. The aim of this research workshop, as has been variously stated before, was to enable the researcher obtain teachers' perspectives about contextually appropriate pedagogic practices in ELT. This meant that my own preconceptions had to be set aside in favour of teachers' perspectives. More importantly, because the focus of this study was on good and appropriate practices, it was important to encourage teachers to identify such practices by employing a positive discourse. It is in this light that it was agreed that rather than 'criticise' each videoed lesson, participants were going to *appraise* the lessons as well as also sharing stories of their own successful practices. In both research sites, participants valued this shift from lesson criticism to lesson appraisal as can be seen in the excerpt below:

What has really touched me for these 2 days is that we were not asked to criticise; we were encouraged to give our appraisals more than criticising and this gave us an opportunity to see how good we are in spite of the challenges we face every day. If we were to grade some of these lessons without attending this seminar, I want to tell you we would have given some of these lessons 5 [on 20] whereas some of them deserve a 15 or even an 18. (Yaounde workshop)

The foregoing excerpt reveals that the emphasis on lesson appraisal enabled teachers to value the practices of their peers. The participant attempts to grade the lessons, from two perspectives: the deficit perspective of MoE workshops and the perspective of the current research workshop. To her, the real value of these lessons can only be ascertained when they are appraised, not criticised. In an exam-oriented context like Cameroon, this wide difference in scores from 5 (25%) to 15 (75%) or 18(90%) is significant in determining teachers' self-esteem, a theme that was raised in the following excerpt:

This seminar has greatly encouraged me and made me to wipe out the pessimistic view I used to have of myself and even my pupils. I never really used to consider myself as a real master of every lesson I taught due to so many constraints put in place by the NPA and my bosses. (Written feedback Yaounde)

Apart from having the potential to empower teachers through developing a positive self-image in regards to their professional abilities, participants also expressed the perspective that the research workshop could potentially influence the educational system positively:

The truth is that this seminar has changed our mentality. If our seminars can have this positive focus; so we don't sit and talk about the mistakes of teachers in the classroom but we look at that which has been done which is good and how we can improve on that which has been done, I believe it will change the way we work and the educational system as a whole. (Buea Workshop)

The excerpt suggests that a non-judgemental approach to in-service teacher training could empower teachers by enabling them to develop their practices, building on '*that which is good*' in order to '*improve on that which has been done*'. In other words, identifying positives from teachers' current practices could serve as a stimulant for improvement in a way that pointing out their weaknesses has not.

One participant in Buea, however, expressed a contrary perspective; she thought that it was equally important to point out negative aspects of the videoed lessons:

The only thing is that we were not chanced [sic] to say what was wrong about the lessons we watched because this could enable us not to do certain things in class when teaching an English lesson

Although this was generally challenged by other workshop participants, it is an important indication that the approach adopted for this research cannot be assumed to be all-embracing. The perspective expressed by this participant indicates that albeit positive analysis can significantly contribute to professional development, a slavish reliance on its merits could potentially fossilize bad practices if these are not explicitly addressed. This notwithstanding, participants generally approved of this positive approach to analysing teachers' practices arguing that while lesson appraisal had the potential to 'build' upon good practices, lesson criticism resulted in resistance to good practice:

In our schools, we have teachers who say they have been teaching a particular class for 16 years so when they see innovation they want things to remain the way they have been doing them and they argue that their children have been passing exams. This is because when they [inspectors] bring us a new information, they make us feel like all what we have been doing is wrong. But I think that if we could always do things like this where we are appreciating the good work of our colleagues and building from there to improve our own lessons, I think there will be less resistance. (Buea workshop)

The above perspective suggests that one reason for teacher resistance to innovation is the judgemental approach adopted by pedagogic authorities, an approach that treats teachers' practices as deficient. For this participant, adopting the approach of this research could be a useful alternative that involves teachers developing innovative practices from appraising their practices as well as those of their colleagues. No doubt therefore that during the final discussions, teachers recounted with excitement, stories of successful lessons they had taught in the past, but even more strongly, identified aspects

of their own practices that they would improve upon. In the following section, I will deal with these in more detail.

7.4. Perceived benefits of workshop to teachers' personal and professional development

7.4.1. Developing professional knowledge and skills

Probably the major theme that emerged from the workshop data was participants' perspectives about the development of their professional knowledge and skills. As I have explained before, the research workshop was meant to help me ascertain participants' perspectives of what counted as good and appropriate ELT practices in their context. The videoed lessons presented to them were to serve as stimuli for generating insights which I hoped to further develop by making participants aware of insights from learners' perspectives. As much as possible, I avoided giving my own opinions; rather, my contribution to the discussions was to refer to insights from interviews with child-participants and the *Cases* as well as to moderate discussions by drawing participants' attention to apparent mismatches or 'grey' perspectives so as to enable them clarify my doubts. Yet it emerged that, in encouraging these teachers to reflect on positive features in the practices of their peers, insights about developing their own practices were generated. Research participants explained that exploring insights into learners' and their own perspectives of good practice through appraisals of videos of real life lessons helped them develop deeper knowledge and awareness of their and their students' potentials in different areas presented below.

7.4.2. Awareness of learners' abilities

In chapter five and six, findings about teachers' perspectives and practices of group work revealed that teachers in Yaounde, albeit generally in favour of group work, did not often use it in their classes. In Buea, research participants appreciated group work but argued that it was not appropriate in their context; their reasons for not using group work were based on problems of lack of classroom space due to classroom size, time constraints and student noisiness. During workshop discussions about Kingsleys' lesson, participants' attention was drawn to the perspectives of children, especially in Buea, in favour of group/peer learning. This generated further insights which resulted in greater awareness of learners' needs and potentials as can be seen in the following excerpt from Yaounde:

From Harry's report of what children said concerning group work, I really agree with them, that is, the children. [...] I think it is wrong for us to presume that the children are not able to work in groups; we have seen a good example of how well they can develop very good ideas and even good English when they work together. That class is even bigger than most of our classes so I don't think we have any excuse for not doing group work. (Yaounde workshop)

Clearly, watching students carry out group activities and generate ideas and language enabled participants to revisit their initial perspectives on group work. More importantly, it changed their perspectives of the abilities of their students:

...watching the lessons of my colleagues has made me much more aware of some of the key aspects that I don't implement in my class [...] for example group work [...] I used to underestimate my pupils and thus keep them away from some tasks, but from here I believe my pupils will do a much more greater [sic] part of the job than before. [Written feedback, Buea]

The foregoing excerpt reveals that the research workshop discussions had a transformational impact on teachers' perceptions of their learners, a transformation which could in turn influence their subsequent classroom practices. The expressed

determination, by a teacher who hitherto, ‘underestimated’ his learners’ abilities, to involve students in tasks where they will be able to ‘*do much more*’ indicates not only an awareness of student abilities, but also points to the resultant action from such awareness. What is more, from an experiential perspective, (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 2000) participants were able to draw from the benefits, to them, of the collaborative nature of the research workshop and to use these as a basis for developing insights into the potential benefits of group work for their learners as can be seen in the following excerpt:

[...] we have been talking about group work in teaching and I am happy that Harry told us about what the children said about group work. [...] This seminar is a good example of what group work can make learners gain. I am sure that from the way we have exchanged ideas freely and the many ideas we have shared, nobody will argue against group work again [general approval]. Clearly we learn better when we share ideas in small groups. (Buea, workshop)

7.4.3. Awareness of ‘human’ features of pedagogic practice

Another area where workshop participants developed insights about the needs of their learners was in relation to the importance of affective factors. As I have shown in chapter four, children were able to describe the practices of their favourite teachers vividly even in cases where the particular teacher had taught them several years ago. On the contrary when it came to talking about the practices of a teacher they did not like, they focused on affective factors and could hardly remember the teacher’s pedagogic practices. In chapter six, I also presented findings related to workshop participants’ appraisals of affective features in the lessons of their peers. During the workshop, participants identified George’s sense of humour as one of the practices that they would like to implement in their own classes suggesting that apart from focusing on the technical aspects of good teaching, workshop participants were also able to identify, reflect on and adapt humanistic practices that encouraged learning.

During the workshop, I was interested in exploring further what teachers perceived as the major differences between Kingsley and Ivo, given that these two teachers were, for me, special cases not only because their students had rejected the former and ‘imposed’ on me the latter as a better teacher but also because, as I have shown above, adult workshop participants in both research sites had unanimously endorsed Kingsley’s lesson as the most successful of the seven *Cases*. Within the limits imposed on me by my pledge of confidentiality to students, it was not possible for me to reveal exactly what the students had said about both teachers and the circumstances that led to including Ivo in the study. However, I was able to elicit participants’ perspectives by asking participants to reflect on the nature of the interaction between students and teacher in both lessons and to take particular note of classroom discipline, number of students raising their hands to answer the teacher’s questions, student responses and teacher’s reaction to right or wrong answers and any other actions that could give them an idea about which of the two teachers would be the children’s favourite teacher. Workshop participants were able to identify aspects of both teachers’ practice that could be affectively encouraging or discouraging to students. Responding to my question as to which of the two teachers they thought was likely to be loved by the students, research participants in both sites agreed that it would be Ivo:

I will not be surprised if the children select Ivo; he has a way of making his children feel free in his class and the children talk most of the time. When you look at the way he was leading the song and the questions after the song, you notice that the children were all scrambling to answer questions unlike in [Kingsley’s] lesson where only a few students raise their hands to answer questions. So I think, from children’s participation, they are more comfortable in Ivo’s class. (Buea workshop)

I thought that the pupils were very active when they were working in groups but when they started interacting with the teacher [i.e., Kingsley], they looked timid; it is like they were afraid that if they give a wrong answer, the teacher

will shout at them. At the beginning of his lesson he was talking a lot and the children spoke less, but when the children were in their groups, they were talking to each other very well. [...] I think that if he can have the kind of connection with the children that his colleague [Ivo] has, he will be a complete teacher. To me, he is a very good teacher, but I think the children will prefer a teacher like Ivo. [Yaounde workshop]

The excerpts above are not only consistent with students' perspectives of both teachers but reveal that even adult participants were able to identify practices that could have an affective influence on learners. Although, as we have seen above, adult participants thought Kingsley was an excellent teacher, they were unanimous that in terms of their affective appeal to students, Ivo was the more successful teacher. Ivo's practice was variously described as 'tolerant', 'very friendly', 'accepting correction from children', 'child-centred' and 'encouraging [to] the children'. Ivo himself explained his personal approach to teaching in the following words:

When I teach, I want my children to feel free to express themselves. I have learnt a lot from children especially in English. In my English lessons, they are free to correct me; [...] I trained in a francophone training college, so my English, especially spellings, is not very good. I encourage my children to correct me and because I appreciate their help, they also appreciate what I do to them. [...] I cannot cope in a class where children look stressed up. (Ivo, SR)

On the other hand, Kingsley was described as 'impatient', 'talking a lot', 'repeating [students'] answers unnecessarily', and 'very strict'. Taking the discussion further, I wanted to know what participants' thought was the appropriate relationship to build with learners. Here, there were divergent perspectives with some participants in both research sites expressing preference for Kingsley's and others for Ivo's approach to dealing with learners. Those who preferred Kingsley's approach explained that classroom size, lack of textbooks as well as official demands to 'complete the syllabus' in time for official exams did not offer them the opportunity to let students interrupt the lesson as often as

they did in Ivo's lesson. This was in a sense consistent with Kingsley's own philosophy of teaching expressed in the following words:

To me, it is important to maintain a good amount of discipline, if you want children to learn. They easily get distracted in a large class like this one and the only way to bring them back to the lesson is to maintain strict discipline. But I also try to engage them as much as possible, by questioning and encouraging group work. (Kingsley, SR)

Those in favour of Ivo's approach thought it was necessary to address the 'affective domain' of learning as a way of motivating students to learn. However, both groups recognised that parts of Kingsley's lesson 'did not flow' because of the 'stressful atmosphere' created by the teacher 'at the beginning of the lesson' and it was agreed that 'if [Kingsley] can have the kind of connection with the children that his colleague [Ivo] has, he will be a complete teacher.' (Yaounde workshop) In recognising the affective merits of Ivo's lesson, participants also referred to 'cordial teacher-pupil relationships' in the lessons of George and Josephine as being potentially motivational and useful in generating active student participation and engagement. In this way, participants recognised the importance of 'creating a relaxed or friendly atmosphere for learning' (written feedback, Buea) as an essential component of good practice, a view that was consistent with learners' perspectives.

7.4.4. Awareness of innovatory practices

In addition to developing knowledge and awareness of students' potentials and abilities, research workshop participants reported that the workshop had a positive impact on their professional development as it had helped them develop new knowledge and skills useful for their job. In Yaounde for example, a workshop participant affirmed that '*In fact, I leave from here today a different person and I believe that I will be a better*

teacher from today.' This statement was re-echoed variously in both research sites with participants acknowledging that the workshop had made them aware of, or, in some cases, reminded them of innovatory pedagogic practices that they were happy to take to their own classrooms. The following excerpt from a written feedback in Buea is reminiscent of what teachers in both research sites expressed during the workshop and in their written feedback:

... this seminar, I must confess, has exposed me to a lot of important issues related to my field [...] watching the lessons of my colleagues has made me much more aware of some of the key aspects that I don't implement in my class, not because I don't know they are important but because of negligence. For example, group work, creativity and productivity on the part of the teacher, and creating a relaxed or friendly atmosphere for learning. [...] this seminar has greatly encouraged me and made me to wipe out the pessimistic view I used to have of myself and even my pupils. I never really used to consider myself as a real master of every lesson I taught due to so many constraints put in place by the NPA and my bosses. Also, I used to underestimate my pupils and thus keep them away from some tasks, but from here I believe my pupils will do a much more greater (sic) part of the job than before. [Written feedback, Buea]

The excerpt above reveals two levels of participant awareness: an awareness of student abilities and an awareness of the (neglected) importance of affective and collaborative teaching practices. I have dealt with the former above; in this section I present participants' perspectives about what they learned from the workshop in terms of pedagogic practices.

Workshop participants appreciated the fact that the videoed lessons were taught by people like them who were experiencing their realities

This has been an opportunity to see teaching in action by our own colleagues from here [Yaounde] and Buea and to see how they respond to their classrooms. I recognised every lesson because we teach the same syllabus and this is very good for my own development because it is real to my experience. (Yaounde workshop)

In recognising their own realities in the realities of their peers and by focusing on the positive features of the practices of their peers, teachers seemed inclined to learning from these lessons. In response to my request for feedback on the nature and content of the workshop, participants in both research sites unanimously agreed that they had learned new ways, or at least been reminded of existing ways of teaching that were relevant and appropriate to their classrooms. Teachers in Buea, while associating with the practices of their peers, identified features of good practice from Yaounde that they would like to try in their classrooms as can be seen from the following excerpt:

Buea1: *Compared to what we have been doing before I believe what we've had for these 2 days was very enriching because we saw other methods from different teachers and their personal skills; in fact I will try some of their methods when I get back to my class. For instance the teaching of prepositions [Josephine] and the composition the teacher handled in Yaounde [Kingsley]; I love that approach. I have been teaching composition, but not like that; I think watching him teach was very enriching and I will certainly try his approach in my class.*

Several voices: *Same here!*

Harry: *What particular aspects of his approach would you like to try in your class?*

Buea1: *teaching composition in parts, doing the introduction in one lesson, then the body and conclusion in other lessons. But the most important thing is to make children work in groups to generate ideas. I noticed that they were not only developing very good ideas; they were also correcting each other's sentences. The final product was in very good English, better than if individual students had to write their own sentences. I really liked the lesson [General approval]*

Buea2: *I have also learnt a lot from these lessons, especially the teaching of regular and irregular verbs but when I did this, I did not analyse them the way this teacher [Ivo] did it. I will have to repeat this lesson and analyse it the way the teacher did it; I was so impressed.*

Buea3: *The lesson on irregular verbs; I just told my colleague that when I go back to my school, I will teach that lesson again because I feel that I was unjust to my children.*

Buea4: *I have gathered a lot of inspiration in the sense that in every class, we can add group work [like in Kingsley's lesson] and it will enhance the teaching*

and learning process. I have also learnt that in reading comprehension, we should do silent reading, not reading aloud.

The excerpt above is a stretch of uninterrupted discourse that suggests that participants found the workshop a source of knowledge of ‘new’ practices. Kingsley’s practice of splitting up a writing lesson into different parts and the importance of group work in helping learners generate ideas and develop their language proficiency; Ivo’s approach to teaching irregular verbs as well as Josephine’s practice in teaching prepositions were some of the things workshop participants highlighted as worthy of emulating. The fact that some research participants felt they had been ‘unjust’ to their learners and the determination to ‘repeat’ the lesson on irregular verbs suggests that participants were able to reflect on their own practices from watching their peers and appraising their practices, to be able to make decisions about their own practices.

Perhaps the most telling perspective was the general endorsement of Kingsley’s teaching practices, (particularly his use of group work) which contrasted the perspective of his own learners. The repeated reference to Kingsley’s use of group work by teachers in Buea is quite significant as an aspect of professional development in this study; it represents a shift in perspective from their initial reluctance to group work. In chapter 4 (section 4.3.5) it was revealed that students were generally in favour of group/peer collaboration, a perspective which contrasted those expressed by teachers, especially those in Buea (see 6.3.1). However, through further examination of student-student interaction within the lesson as well as an appraisal of the co-constructed texts produced by the groups through an exploration of students’ perspectives on group work and a re-examination of teachers’ perspectives of what learner-centredness encompasses, workshop participants in Buea were able to develop alternative perspectives about group

work: ‘*in every class, we can add group work.*’ In both research sites, Kingsley’s lesson was heralded as ‘excellent’ challenging the argument (see chapter 5) that group work was inappropriate for large classes. Being the largest class in the sample (with 103 students in all), the perceived success of the lesson, encouraged participants to revisit their initial prejudices resulting in introspections such as expressed by the participant below:

I think that there are no constraints [of using group work]; it is just the teacher’s negligence and wishing to have things move fast. So instead of saying that it [group work] is difficult, I would say it is time consuming. [...] It is not at all difficult; it is just because we neglect these things because we want to go quickly. (Yaounde workshop)

Consequently, at the end of the second day of discussions, it became clear that participants in Yaounde had also shifted their initial perspectives, and were beginning to see group work not as a challenge, but as a facilitating practice:

From yesterday’s lesson, I will take group work, assignments and the sense of humour [George’s lesson]; also learning by demonstration [George’s lesson]. Kingsley’s lesson, for me, was the most successful lesson in all [...] it has convinced me beyond any doubt that our children can develop many ideas and improve their language. Sometimes we as teachers are even obstacles to their learning; we really need to empower our learners by giving them the opportunity to work together; this will make life easy for us. [Yaounde workshop]

In Yaounde, workshop participants also expressed the perspective that although there were a few contextual differences that imposed certain practices in Yaounde, there were practices in the videoed lessons from Buea which could be adopted to enrich their current practices. One such practice which was continuously referred to over the two days in Yaounde was Alberto’s concluding question which required students to assess their own learning. As Alberto’s concluding question in his videoed lesson had become a catch-expression in Yaounde, I used it to encourage teachers to sum up what they had

learned from the lessons in Buea. The following practices were particularly appreciated by participants:

Harry: *what will you take home from the lessons from Buea?*

Yaounde1: *Letting the children bring out the lesson topic by guiding them. [Alberto's lesson]*

Yaounde2: *Finding out at the end of the lesson what they are taking away; summarising the lesson with them. [Alberto's lesson]*

Several voices: *What is your take home message? Very important.*

Yaounde3: *The interactive nature of the classroom; I will try to make my lessons more interactive; the children should always listen to their friends, repeat good answers or give reasons to support what their friends are saying. [Josephine's lesson]*

One thing that I will implement in my teaching is that I will make sure that at the end of every lesson, I find out my learners' take home message. [Written feedback, Yaounde]

Apart from learning from the practices of their peers in Buea, participants in Yaounde were also challenged to revisit their own practices by drawing from the practices of their own colleagues in Yaounde:

I have been able to learn, especially from [George's] lesson; his method of teaching spelling and dictation because we have been so dogmatic in our ways.

This seminar is a pedagogic eye opener in the teaching of English language. There are little things that we ignore at times but they are very important. Take for example, the noise in the class – many teachers think that noise means that children are not following the lesson – but we have realised here now; when I want to consider whether to say stop noise or not, I have to give an ear to what they are saying, because I may be stopping them from discussing ideas linked to the lesson. Not all noise is destructive; in these lessons, noise was very constructive.

The foregoing excerpts suggests that in the perceptions of workshop participants, the nature of this research workshop, though not intended as a training workshop, significantly facilitated learning. They were able to learn new ways of teaching different aspects of the English language like reading, grammar, spelling, dictation and writing; they developed new ideas about the value of group work as well as new insights about

affective practices, classroom management especially in terms of the nature and value of classroom noise.

7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to present findings from teacher-participants' perceptions of their workshop experience of exploring insights into good/appropriate teaching practices. The findings suggest that workshop participants preferred the approach adopted in this research workshop to the current MoE workshops in Cameroon. Their disapproval of the current MoE training model was revealed in the various themes that emerged from their description and assessment of MoE training workshops as well as the conduct of their trainers. Amongst other things, participants' preference for the present research workshop procedure was justified by their reference to the facilitator's attitude, as well as the collaborative and non-judgemental nature of workshop deliberations. In investing in rapport building prior to the workshop and in adopting interactional strategies that would help break the power differential between myself and the teachers, my hope was to establish a platform that will enable teachers express themselves freely and help me ascertain their perspectives on the subject of this study. I did not envisage the workshop as a training workshop. Yet, as can be seen from perspectives expressed by participants, the workshop turned out to be a learning experience for them; they saw it as a forum through which they had learnt/acquired new knowledge, skills and practices from their peers but also new attitudes from the 'facilitator'. Clearly therefore, the research procedure for this study provided an opportunity for teachers to enrich their professional knowledge and practice through an exploration of their learners' and their own insights into good/appropriate ELT practice. For a research study of this nature, which was intended not to train teachers on teaching

practices, but to elicit data on their perspectives of good and appropriate teaching practices, this revelation was quite significant.

Chapter Eight

Discussion

8.1. Introduction

This study set out to investigate students' and teachers' understandings of good and appropriate ELT practices in state English medium primary schools in Cameroon, with the aim of gaining insights, from their perceptions and actual classroom practices that may enrich the process of policy/innovation enactment and dissemination in the future.

To guide this investigation the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are young learners' perceptions of good English language teaching practices?
2. What do teachers perceive as appropriate teaching practices within their working context?
3. What are teacher-participants' perceptions of their workshop experience of exploring insights into good/appropriate teaching practices?

To find answers to these questions, data was collected in two phases: phase one consisted of child-group interviews with students, observation and video recording of English lessons and stimulated recall with 7 teachers (*Cases*). After a preliminary analysis of these data, common codes were identified and used to enrich discussions in the second phase of data collection which consisted of two-day workshop group discussions with 15 teachers in each of the two research sites, during which period participants watched each videoed lesson in turn and commented on the good and

appropriate pedagogic practices in each lesson. Findings related to the three main research questions above have been presented in Chapters Four, Six and Seven respectively. In this chapter, I discuss these findings in relation to previous studies and with respect to the contribution of the present study to methodological procedures for identifying and disseminating good and appropriate ELT practices. The chapter therefore focuses on the major issues emanating from the research process and procedure and relates these to the major findings of the study.

8.2. Summary of convergent (student and teacher) perspectives of good/appropriate ELT pedagogy

In presenting the findings of this study, student and teacher perspectives were considered separately in Chapter Four and Chapter Six respectively. In this section, I bring these findings together to establish a convergence of perspectives between both groups of participants which can form the basis for developing good practice in this context. The findings presented in Chapters Four and Six of this study reveal that despite significant differences in perspectives between students and teachers (see section 8.5.2 below), both groups of participants possessed shared notions of what constituted good/appropriate language teaching pedagogy in this context. Shared notions were principally related to language teaching activities that encouraged active participation of students in a stress-free language classroom environment. Drawing from their experiences with their current as well as former teachers, and also from their ideas about what they would like to do if they were teachers, students were able to clearly articulate their preferred language teaching practices, which practices resonated both with teachers' ideas and reports of appropriate ELT. Both groups of participants seemed to agree on the appropriateness of pedagogic practices like explanations and demonstrations (see 4.3.1 and 6.3.3),

(personalised and context-related) exemplification (see 4.3.2 and 6.3.3), questioning and feedback (see 4.3.3 and 6.3.2), use of teaching aids and realia (see 4.3.4 and 6.3.3) as well as on the use of creative activities like songs, rhymes, stories (see 4.3.6 and 6.3.4).

The identification, by both students and teachers, of explanations, demonstrations and exemplification as aspects of good teaching also correlates with previous studies which recommend these practices in language teaching. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) suggest that for learners between the ages of 8-11, language teaching has to include movement, demonstration and activities that involve the senses, while Halliwell (1992) recommends the alternating use of ‘activities that stir’ and ‘activities that settle’. There was extensive reference to lessons that included both teacher and learners ‘doing the action’ in both research sites; in fact the most vividly co-constructed sequences of dialogue were when students explained humorous instances of demonstration in the classroom (see for example George and Ivo’s students in section 4.3.1). The importance of questioning and feedback in language teaching has also been variously explored especially in the literature on classroom interaction (e.g., Aliakbari & Mashhadialvar 2006; Farahian & Rezaee 2012; Long & Sato 1983; Thompson, 1997; Ur 1996; Wong & Waring, 2009), with researchers and ELT experts agreeing that both the quality and quantity of questions and feedback can influence learning. In this study, teachers reported that extensive teacher questioning represented one aspect of their shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching and it was clear from students’ perspectives that this practice was helpful to their learning.

In the same way, practices like the use of teaching aids and realia and also creative activities identified in this study echo existing literature in language teaching and TEYL

in particular. Previous studies in Cameroon (e.g. Che 1998; Folindjo 1999; Ticha 1999; Wirsiy 1999;) and elsewhere (e.g., Gonzalez 2010; Nino 2010; Pinter 2006) have highlighted the value of visual aids and of bringing realia to the young learner language classroom. In a recent study exploring TEYL pedagogic practices, Garton, Copland & Burns (2011) report how a teacher in Tanzania following a presentation and practice procedure in teaching grammar is still able to make lessons relevant to students' lives by personalising content, referring to people and events in their environment or through the use of realia. This is very similar to references, for example by Alberto, to familiar people in the students' community like Mbako (see 6.3.3) and AlbertoG5's account of how her teacher's references to a recent mountain eruption in their locality helped her understand certain vocabulary items (see 4.3.2). Students' and teachers' agreement on the appropriateness of songs, rhymes, and stories is also consistent with the already extensive literature (see 1.7) on the use of creative activities in the EYL classroom. Although, as I have shown here, these ideas and practices are not new to TEYL, their identification by both groups of research participants lends credibility to their appropriateness to the context under study.

In addition to the shared perspectives above, there were other perspectives that were unique to each group of participants. Child-participants showed an inclination to instrumental motivation (see 4.2). Being in the final year of primary education, they were interested in teaching that prepares them for their exams. Therefore, telling them what to prepare for the exams and having good scores in practice exercises were important for them. MarthaG3, for example, appreciated her teacher for giving students past examination questions and telling them which sections are always repeated in the exams while, apart from KinivoB1, all other students presented as their best lessons

those in which they had scored high marks in the practice exercise. Previous studies that explore young learners' perspectives of good teachers (e.g. Kutnick & Jules, 1993) show that children are more concerned with relationship issues whereas studies which explore parents' perspectives (e.g., Liu & Meng, 2009) reveal that student performance in examinations is an important factor for determining good teachers. The findings of this study not only contrast with previous research but suggest that when attention is paid to good teaching rather than good teachers, and when this is based on concrete stimuli (e.g. discussing best lessons and how they were taught) students may be able to provide deeper and broader insights, some of which may reflect adult perspectives.

What is more, the findings also suggest that parental interest in the success of their children in official exams might as well influence the way students perceive good teaching practices. Findings specific to teachers included organisational features like time management and classroom discipline (see 6.4) and methodological procedure (see 6.6). In terms of time management, appropriate practice consisted of keeping each lesson within the timeframe allocated for it in the timetable. On the basis of this, participants viewed negatively the fact that Martha's lesson, due to its adherence to the NPA went beyond time while another lengthy lesson by George was commended on the basis that it constituted more than one lesson objective. Participants agreed that while the NPA methodological procedure limited their chances of achieving time management, the alternative three-stage lesson format (see 6.6) was compatible with the demands of time imposed on them by the curriculum and examination demands. This preference for a pre-NPA methodological procedure confirms the suggestion by Gross, Giacquinta & Bernstein (1971) that teachers tend to revert to the security of their previous practice if in-service training does not convincingly provide them with the ideological and practical

requirements of new approaches. In the context of the findings of the present study, the new policy and the method of transmission were seen to have ignored the contextual realities of teachers (see chapter five) resulting in a return to the Introduction-Presentation-Evaluation lesson procedure as well as to the micro-level requirements of *the Syllabus* (see 1.6.1) which reflected their current practices. Comments on classroom management were mainly related to disruptive behaviour like noisiness and teachers shared different strategies for managing these.

8.3. Remapping a research focus: good teachers or good teaching?

From a research perspective, research into good teachers (particularly in the area of teacher expertise) reveals that identifying good teachers is often slippery and difficult to justify. Past studies (e.g. Peterson & Comeaux, 1987; Sabers et al., 1991; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Leinhardt et al., 1991; Shulman, 1992; Tsui, 2003) suggest a criterion-based approach to selecting good teachers but, as these studies have shown, researchers are as yet unable to agree on what constitutes expertise in teaching. This is partly because teaching is not an exact science but an activity involving the interaction of several forces. Evidence from the present study shows that even the application of a careful combination of criteria for selecting good teachers, generated from stakeholders' perspectives (also see Tsui 2003; Leinhardt et al 1991) can hardly yield unequivocal agreement on who a good teacher is. The fact that child-participants rejected a teacher who was very highly rated by adult stakeholders and recommended one who was hitherto not even considered in the recommendations serves to problematize the notion of research into good teachers. What is more, previous studies on good teachers/teaching (see section 2.9) have focused on perceptions of teachers (e.g. Beishuizen et al., 2001), learners (e.g. Kutnick & Jules, 1993) or parents (e.g. Liu & Meng, 2009) separately

without associating such perceptions with actual teaching practice. Besides, these studies are usually based on participants' reports of practices, not in response to any concrete pedagogic event.

One contribution of the present study then is the fact that, although it started out by identifying good teachers, its main focus was not on the 'goodness' of the teachers; rather, selected teachers only served the purpose of providing input for the generation of ideas about good teaching. Unlike Kutnick and Jules' (1993) study, which simply asked children to talk about a good teacher in general terms, this study used specific stimuli in the form of students' best English lessons and other participatory strategies (see section 3.3.5.3.2.h) as a basis for talking about teachers' practices. As a result, students were able to find a safe space within which to assert their opinions, influencing, as it were, the 'shape' of the entire study, by strongly recommending a seventh teacher whose inclusion, as will be shown later, provided further insights into teachers' understanding of the importance of affect on effectiveness in TEYL. As far as teachers' perspectives are concerned, videoed lessons constituted the pedagogic events that stimulated and directed discussions about good teaching. Rather than asking teachers to talk about the characteristics of a good teacher in general terms, as in the study by Beishuizen et al. (2001), participants were exposed to lessons taught by their peers, in classroom contexts that were similar to theirs, and were asked to appraise these lessons in the light of their own experiences. As a result, teachers were able to identify aspects of good practice not only in the videoed lesson, but also from their own stories of success.

Using specific input to engage both students and teachers in discussions about good teaching rather than about good teachers, as was the case in this study, enabled both the

researcher and participants to develop useful insights that enriched our understanding of those factors that could be considered as plausible in language teaching in this context. What is more, the fact that this study depended on a triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations and group discussions) and perspectives (both students' and teachers') lent further credibility to the findings. Also, in incorporating students' perspectives into the group discussions with teachers, the latter were able to revisit some of their earlier perspectives about good teaching. The findings from this study (see chapters four, six and seven) suggest that researching good teaching may be a more relevant and unequivocal pursuit than the search for what characterises a good teacher.

8.4. The need to study context in ELT in Cameroon

In chapter one (1.6, 1.6.1 and 1.6.2), I described the policy changes that took place in Cameroon in the late 1990s, notably the methodological changes from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach to teaching and explained the basis for such change as emanating from official dissatisfaction over the 'far from satisfactory' practices of teachers (Guide, p.72) and the urgent need for the MoE to provide a panacea to teachers' pedagogic deficiencies. Findings presented in chapter five revealed that teachers were resistant to the methodological procedure of the NPA and, as a result, they were implementing classroom teaching in ways that respond to the specificities of their classrooms, rather than as stipulated by national policy. This resistance was justified by teachers' suspicion that it was an imported practice which was mostly out-of-tune with their own realities because it did not address the micro and macro constraints of the Cameroonian educational system (see 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.2.2, 5.2.2.3 and 5.2.3). These findings are consistent with those of studies in other parts of the world (see 2.2) where

communicative and learner-centred approaches are being promoted in official discourse with no explicit consideration of contextual exigencies.

The shortcomings of the discourse of methods and the need for a more context-sensitive approach to language teaching have been well argued in the literature (see sections 2.4 and 2.5). In Bax's (2003) article, he recommends the 'explicit enthronement of context' in the discourse of language teacher training, arguing that fuller attention to the context in which language teaching operates as well as explicit empowerment, education and encouragement of teachers to explore the potential of their context will be beneficial to the ELT profession (p.284). Arguments for exploring the social (macro and micro) contexts of language teaching (e.g., Holliday 1994b) and for taking into consideration the sociocultural experiences of language learners (e.g. Kumaravadivelu 2001; 2006) suggest that developing a one-size-fits-all approach to language teaching might ignore the more important forces that affect language learning. As has been shown in the theory-practice disconnection literature (2.2), ignoring the day-to-day conundrums of practitioners could militate against even the best innovation. This is even more the case in a country like Cameroon which is a conglomerate of tribes and languages (see Kuchah 2008; 2009) with different cultural values and practices. In addition to the contextual challenges highlighted by participants in chapter five, socio-economic factors like parental poverty and the involvement of children in post-school activities like farming and petty business (e.g. JosephineB2) or, as in Yaounde, the use of French language outside the classroom seem not to have been taken into consideration in the enactment of the NPA. Ivo's description of pedagogic authorities as 'completely ignorant' of their classroom realities (5.2.3) is ipso facto applicable to the methodological procedure these authorities promote. As Lieberman (1995) has argued,

even those teachers who are positively excited about, and committed to new ideas about the content and process of teaching may find it hard to integrate such ideas into their practices if these are competing with teachers' daily nature of work. This is even more valid in a context like Cameroon where the innovation significantly departs from teachers' own learning experiences as well as from their previous practices. Thus, research participants admitted they only wrote lesson plans following the NPA procedure for the purpose of satisfying pedagogic supervisors but when it came to their actual teaching, they applied the practices presented in chapter six. This situation highlights the importance of an approach to pedagogical development that is guided by the contextual realities of the main actors - teachers and learners - and which takes into consideration the social, cultural, economic and linguistic realities that affect the lives of these actors.

8.5. Re-configuring the search for context-appropriacy in ELT: an alternative roadmap

In Chapter two (sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) I reviewed literature on the disconnections that exist between the theory/policy-decisions and practice of language teaching in many parts of the world, arguing that this was mainly due to the fact that most of this theory does not respond to the contextual realities within which teachers work. While there have been several calls for a context-based approach to developing language teaching practices (see 2.4), there have been very few suggestions about how this approach can be configured.

Prabhu's (1990) suggestion to focus on the teacher's sense of plausibility not only fails to provide a clear framework for developing language teaching and teacher education

but also suggests a heterogeneity in practice that may be difficult to conceptualise. Rubdy (2008) presents a very eloquent critique of the derivative and imitative nature of ELT in former colonial countries (like Cameroon) and goes on to recommend ‘a collaboratively worked out understanding of the local situation’ (p.27) without explaining how this can be done and integrated into language teaching concretely. Suggestions by Bax (2003) and Kumaravadivelu (2001; 2003; 2006) seem to be based on the idea of an ‘ideal’ language teacher and teaching context and do not take into consideration the vast differences that exist among English teachers in terms of language proficiency, confidence level, training/qualification, class sizes, workload and the availability/unavailability of material and technological resources around the world (see also 2.5 for critiques of the post method ideology). Holliday’s (1994b) recommendation for ethnographic action research is also not clearly articulated and as such gives the impression that this will depend, not on practitioners themselves, but on an expert outsider. This is because it neither provides a clear framework for such research, nor explains how TESEP teachers with limited proficiencies, training and huge macro and micro constraints and pressure can cope with the demands of systematic ethnographic research.

Findings from the present study suggest the need for an alternative roadmap to developing and disseminating context appropriate ELT from the bottom up which takes into consideration the practices and perspectives of both students and teachers within specific contexts reflecting positively on specific stimuli in the form of concrete lessons or videos of lessons taught by teachers within the same context. In this model, teachers are neither required to add a research component to their existing conundrums nor do they need an outsider’s judgement of their practices and suggestions for ‘action’ and

improvement as has been the case in most TT&D projects that have ended up in what Holliday (1992) has termed ‘tissue rejection’. The search for context-appropriate ELT within the framework of the model proposed in this study involves a number of interrelated factors/steps, as discussed below.

8.5.1. Rapport building: creating the right enabling environment

The literature on TT&D (see 2.3) tends to focus on the transmission of a technical set of skills, techniques and procedures for language teaching without considering that this involves human beings and as such requires much more than just the transmission of technical skills and knowledge. This is consistent with the findings of this study about the current MoE training model in Cameroon (see 7.1, 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3) which, in addition to being limited to the design of lesson plans based on the NPA methodological procedure, is also characterised by trainer and training attitudes that tend to ignore the human dimensions of teachers’ lives. As the findings of this study suggest, building positive relationships with teachers in ways that enable them to engage in the planning and management of their own professional development could be a useful way of approaching teacher training and development. As has been argued by Bushe (2007, p. 3), and other proponents of appreciative inquiry (e.g. Mohr & Watkins 2002; van Buskirk 2002), strong positive relationships in human and organisational development have the potential to overcome bad practices while even the best practices might hardly overcome bad relationships. In this study, the researcher’s sensitive and careful approach to relationship building (see 3.3.5.3.1 and 7.2) empowered teachers, enabling them to appropriate the workshop and workshop proceedings and this helped them to generate ideas about good and appropriate language teaching, drawing from their own context and experiences, but also from ideas from their students’ perspectives that were provided

to them by the researcher. As was suggested in written feedback in Buea (see section 7.3.2) the fact that the researcher is seen to be on the side of the teachers rather than ‘on the big side’ could dissipate the power barriers between inspectors/researchers and teachers, and in doing so, could present a platform for mutual exchange and professional knowledge development which, as can be seen in section 7.3.2, can influence teachers’ attitude towards, and practice with, their learners.

In the same light, students’ perspectives emerged clearly mainly because the researcher provided them with a ‘safe space’ (see 3.3.5.3.2) which enabled them take control of the agenda of the child-group interview. The research approach in the interviews paved the way for the richness of the interview data and, through various rapport building strategies, I managed to get the children not only to open up but also challenge not only my perspectives (see Kuchah & Pinter 2012 for an account of this), but also the perspectives of adult stakeholders. In engaging in different socialisation activities with children, in relying on them for some of the decisions about the venue, date and time of the discussion, in seeking their own consent (in addition to that of gatekeepers and parents) and monitoring this throughout the interview, in allowing them to talk about issues of interest (some of which were irrelevant to my purpose) and in taking their opinions seriously (e.g. the inclusion of a seventh teacher), this research was able to generate insights that might otherwise have not emerged in an otherwise non-participatory research procedure where children are treated as objects or subjects rather than, as in this study, social actors and partners in the research process.

In terms of research procedure therefore, relationship building with both adult and child research participants in this study proved to be as important as the technicality of

building the research from bottom up. The fact that children and teachers were respected and that I based the investigation on their own ideas (including teachers' definition of context-appropriateness) rather than on pre-conceived ideas accounted for the huge amount of data and insights generated during the study. My paradigmatic stance of social-constructivism therefore included not just the data generation and analysis process but also the process of planning and organising the research and this facilitated, and was in turn facilitated by the development of rapport between researcher and participants as well as amongst participants.

8.5.2. Relying on student agency

In chapter two (section 2.8.1) I argued for an approach to learner-centredness which takes into consideration children's perspectives about their experience of learning and the kind of teaching that facilitates this, drawing from developments in the fields of Sociology and Anthropology where there is already a well-established emphasis on children's agency in matters of importance in their lives. In sections 3.3.5.3.2 and 8.5.1 above I presented participatory strategies and rapport building with children as an important condition for enabling children's perspectives to freely emerge and explained how these perspectives were incorporated into discussions with teachers (see also 3.3.5.3.1). In this section, I discuss some of the subtle and profound differences between teachers' and students' perspectives in this study and show how ideas from child-group interviews enabled adult participants to revisit/modify their initial perspectives on the appropriateness/inappropriateness of same practices.

The findings presented in chapter four of this study revealed that students had clear ideas about what constituted good ELT practices although these were overshadowed by their

insistence on affective factors. In other words, an affective alignment with particular teachers was the pre-condition for being able to perceive their actual teaching practices. KinivoG1 for example was unable to talk about Kingsley's teaching (see 4.1) because she saw him as a teacher who scared children by always being angry. On the other hand, although Grace's students thought she was good at teaching mathematics and that her colleague was a better English teacher than her (see 3.3.5.3.2.i) they were still able to relate with her partly because of her parental attitude towards them (see 4.1.1.2). In discussing pedagogic practices, Grace's students constantly shifted from her practice to the practices of a former good English teacher (see 4.3.6 for example) showing that although affective factors mattered to them, they could clearly articulate good practices in the teaching of their teachers.

A major point of divergence between teachers' and students' perspectives, therefore, was in relation to the nature and importance of affective factors in learning. While teachers perceived affective learning as a result of the application of a set of technical strategies and procedures, students thought this had to do with human factors. Students' perceptions of procedural practices were intricately linked to the teacher's personality traits, that is, those features of the teacher's behaviour that appealed to them affectively (see 4.1). Positive affective factors like the teacher's sense of humour (4.1.1.1) a friendly and parental attitude towards them (4.1.1.2) as well as an appreciation of students' efforts (4.1.1.3). Of these three factors, only the third – appreciating students' efforts through praise – was shared by both groups of participants. The preponderance of affective factors in the discourse of child-participants in this study suggests that for these young learners, a low affective filter (Krashen 1982) orchestrated by the interplay of the teacher's positive human qualities and interesting procedural activities (Schinke-Llano

& Vicars 1993) is a precondition for learning. In this respect, it may be concluded that for them, affective and effective teaching are interwoven.

Despite the convergence of perspectives on the appropriateness of procedural practices (see 8.2 above), insights from students' perspectives showed they were more interested in taking up more challenging roles than teachers had hitherto allowed them to do. Students preferred teachers who gave them cognitively challenging tasks, who did not just acknowledge students' correct answers or provide students with answers to their questions, but encouraged them to think and justify their answers (see for example JosephineB5 and KinivoG1, 4.3.3); they wanted to share the responsibility of developing content by doing research and sharing knowledge with their peers rather than depending entirely on the teacher (4.3.4); what is more, students enjoyed lessons where teachers made use of teaching aids and realia but wanted to share the responsibility of providing teaching aids for the language lesson as well (4.3.4).

On the other hand, although there were some instances of the practices discussed above both in the videoed lessons and in the discourse of teachers, adult-participants did not seem to articulate the importance of the role of students in developing and sharing knowledge and materials in the sense in which students saw it. Teachers appreciated the fact, for example, that their peers in the videoed lessons made extensive use of questioning as a way of generating student participation, but did not comment on the nature and dynamics of questioning, tasks and feedback in the way students did (compare, for example, 4.3.3. and 6.3.2.). What is more, teachers seemed to presume that it was entirely their role to provide teaching materials as well as to guide learners to developing content (see 6.3.2 and 6.3.5.), a perspective which contrasted with that of

child-participants (see 4.3.4.). Also, teachers' appraisal of the use of teaching aids and other activities that generate learner participation in the videoed lessons was consistent with learners' perspectives and resonated with recommendations in the literature (see 8.2 above). Yet neither the literature nor teachers' perspectives have as yet clearly articulated the important contribution of young learners in this respect. Students' desire, in this study, to be actively involved in performing some of the functions that are traditionally ascribed to the teacher in this context shows that these students would like teaching practices that allow them some amount of control over teaching and learning processes. Clearly, for these students, good teaching needs to take into account the fact that students can be active contributors to the teaching and learning process; it has to provide students with opportunities to participate in lesson planning, to discover and share knowledge as well as check their own understanding.

There were also notable intricacies in reconciling the perspectives of both groups of participants in terms of their perceptions of the appropriateness of collaborative learning through group or pair work. Within both groups of participants, there were contrasting perspectives about the use of group work, although most child-participants in Buea preferred practices that gave them the opportunity to work in groups. In Yaounde, both students and teachers reported that group work was part of their classroom practice although teachers thought that this was constrained by other curriculum pressures. The very animated discussions about the merits, for students, of working in groups in Buea (see 4.3.5) significantly contrasted with the perspectives of their teachers who thought it was not appropriate practice in their context. Students' expressed liking for teaching that involves them working collaboratively is consistent with socio-constructivism research which presents collaborative learning as a useful way of encouraging learners to scaffold

each other's language learning (see for example Assinder 1991; Long & Porter 1985; Mendonca & Johnson 1994; Nelson & Murphy 1993; Ohta 1995; Villamil & de Guerrero 1998). Collaborative learning through group and pair work has also been suggested as a possible solution to managing learning in large classes (see Watson-Todd 2006) but the studies cited here have often focused on older learners. There is however some evidence from EYL research (e.g., Anderson & Lynch 1988; Nelson 1996; Pinter 2007) pointing to the potential for peer-peer interaction to improve with maturation. Pinter's (2007) study with two Hungarian 10-year-old EFL learners demonstrates that peer-peer interactions at a very low level of competence can yield dividends. In the case of this study, it was the students themselves who argued in favour of teaching practices that allow them to engage in challenging tasks by interacting with their peers, rather than depending on the teacher alone. Such a perspective from learners suggests that encouraging learners to be able to regulate their learning in groups and pairs (or even individually as preferred by AlbertoG4) could be a gateway to helping them achieve self-regulation and autonomy.

The subtle divergences between students' and teachers' perspectives presented above raise the question as to what importance has to be given to learners' perspectives in teaching and teacher training and development. Clearly, the understandings of these teachers did not fully take into consideration the perspectives of their students and that is why, although both groups had shared perspectives, there were significant differences in their understanding of the value of some of the practices they shared. However, in identifying students' perspectives and incorporating them in the workshop discussions, teachers were able to develop new insights that helped transform their initial perceptions of appropriate ELT. In the following section, I discuss the transformations that took

place in teachers' perspectives as a result of gaining insights from students' perspectives during the research workshop.

8.5.3. An enhancement paradigm: the benefits of focusing on the positive

So far, I have discussed findings in relation to the perspectives and actual, as well as reported classroom practices of students and teachers in this context, showing that while students and teachers shared common insights in terms of good and appropriate procedural activities in the language classroom, there were important areas of divergence in their perspectives which need to be addressed in teacher development. In chapter seven, I presented the current practice of teacher training in Cameroon, showing its limitations from the perspectives of teachers, and I went on to present findings on how the alternative presented in this study was perceived by research participants. The findings revealed that, although not explicitly designed to do so, the methodological procedure for this study provided an alternative to the current model of teacher training in Cameroon.

As was explained in chapter three (3.1.1) the paradigmatic stance guiding this research falls within the tenets of social constructivism and the study also drew from social constructionist ideas in the area of appreciative inquiry as a basis for adopting a positive approach in the investigation. From my experience of working with teachers in this context (see prologue) I developed the hypothetical idea that a shift from the traditional problem-based approach to teacher training to a more enabling and positive approach that recognises teachers' agency while incorporating students' perspectives might help enrich my understanding of what teachers valued in their own practices but also enable me to ascertain teachers' responses to students' perspectives. As mentioned earlier, the

purpose of the research workshop was not to show participants model lessons from which to copy good practice; rather, it was to help me collect further data on their perspectives of what constituted good and appropriate practice in their contexts. The videoed lessons were therefore only stimuli for generating discussions on the subject of my research. However, it emerged that in encouraging teachers to focus on the positives in appraising the lessons of their peers and in challenging them with insights from learners' perspectives, new insights, ideas and principles were generated and disseminated amongst research workshop participants. Participants acknowledged having gained a new awareness of the abilities of learners (see 7.4.2), of the importance of human qualities in teaching (see 7.4.3) as well as of innovatory practices (see 7.4.4), an awareness which could be further explored in training, to minimize mismatches between teaching and learning agendas (Nunan 1995; Bourke 2006).

In terms of the nature of the relationship between teachers and students, the workshop deliberations facilitated a shift in perspective, on the part of research participants, from a focus on 'technical' activities for generating a stress-free learning environment (6.5) to a consideration of human factors like George's sense of humour and Ivo's tolerance, friendly nature and humility. By drawing participants' attention to the lessons of Ivo and Kingsley and asking them to guess which of the two teachers would appeal to students more, participants were able to identify a connection between Ivo and his students that was lacking in Kingsley's lesson and as such came to the conclusion that although Kingsley's lesson was still the most successful of the videoed lessons, it could benefit more if the teacher created the kind of 'connection' that was visible in Ivo's lesson. Participants clearly found clues, from the nature of students' participation in groups and in response to both teachers' questions that students tended to be more willing to

respond to Ivo than they were to Kingsley although through group work the latter had enabled students to generate a lot of discussion and language output.

The development of participants' awareness of the abilities of students to co-construct ideas and scaffold each other's language through the exploration of Kingsley's lesson also enabled them to develop understanding of innovatory practices. Their understanding of learner-centredness as encouraging students to 'do more work' in the lesson had mainly been translated to imply extended teacher questioning and other interactive whole-class activities (see 6.3.3; 6.3.3; 6.3.4; 6.3.5; 6.3.6; 6.3.7); this is because they either assumed that students were unable to cope with the responsibilities of peer-collaboration or because they were compounded by other practical constraints (6.3.1). However in watching students actively involved in group work activities; in listening to my account of students' perspectives on the value of group work to them and in undergoing the experience of a workshop that was built on group discussions, participants were able to reconsider their initial perspectives in the light of their new understanding and experience of peer-collaboration. Research into the relationship between emotions and action (e.g. Insen 2000) demonstrates that when people experience positive feelings, they tend to be more flexible, creative, open to information, thoughtful and integrative and as a result are more readily predisposed to accept a broader variety of behavioural options. In this light, it can be argued that the relationship established prior to and throughout the study between researcher and participants provided the right affective environment needed for developing innovative ideas. What is more, the fact that the workshop not only aimed at identifying good practice in the videoed lessons, but encouraged participants to reflect on students' perspectives as well as tell their own stories of successful language lessons rather than focusing on their

problems enabled teachers share ideas and practices with each other which in turn enabled them to mutate from their initial perceptions to more learner-compatible perceptions. Participants saw in the proceedings of the research workshop a generative potential in the sense that they were able to clearly identify pedagogic practices which they would like to emulate. This was also partly because the practices presented to them were conducted in classrooms that resonated with their own experiences and partly because the process of setting up and running the workshop provided an enabling environment for teachers to explore their understandings from analysing the work of their peers without heavy outside values imposed on them. The perspectives presented in sections 7.4.1. 7.4.3 and 7.4.4 illustrate the generative potential, of a bottom up model of teacher development based on an enhancement paradigm and confirm the argument that

...teachers are more likely to accept pedagogic innovation when it is seen to emanate from, or be endorsed by, their peers. This is because teachers are too used to being blamed for the failure of pedagogic policies when such policies are enacted and handed down by different official bodies with little or no consideration for those who are called upon to implement them in the classroom (Kao, Grima & Kuchah 2013, p.148).

Encouraging teachers to identify features of good and appropriate pedagogy in the practices of their own colleagues and to reflect on these in the light of their own success stories; stimulating discussions that incorporated insights from both teachers' and learners' perspectives of good practice; establishing a symmetrical relationship where mutuality of thought, experience and ideology superseded the establishment of power barriers between trainer and trainees, helped participants generate pedagogic knowledge, principles and practices which were appropriate to their classrooms. In addition, it helped bridge the divergence between students and teachers' perspectives as teachers were able to take on board ideas from the child-group interviews.

8.5. Problematising the hegemony of context appropriateness

Following Holliday (1994a; 1994b), several ELT researchers and experts (e.g. Canagarajah 2005; Chick 1996; Rubdy 2008; Shamim 1996; Tickoo 1996; also see sections 2.4, 2.5 and 2.7) have questioned the appropriateness of the transfer of ELT ‘technology’ conceptualised by experts in the North to classrooms in the South. These arguments are mainly based on two factors: the socio-cultural differences between North and South contexts and the practical challenges characteristic of Southern classrooms. An example of the former is Sonaya’s (2002) critique of learner autonomy, counteracted by Kuchah & Smith (2011), as a self-centred form of instruction that is at odds with the communal lifestyle of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The latter is captured in Bax’s (2003) contention, challenged by Liao (2004) that CLT is inappropriate in ‘other’ contexts. While such arguments may help practitioners and researchers to develop and refine their thinking about language teaching, they may be ideologically misleading if taken at face value. As the findings of this study show, students’ and teachers’ perspectives of good and appropriate teaching largely resonate with existing studies and principles about young learner teaching in other contexts. These findings suggest that, while there may be cultural particularities that need to be considered in language teaching, such particularities need not be a basis for undermining the possibility that children have shared interests and innate propensities that may transcend cultural barriers. In the same light, it may be naive and insidious to claim that teachers’ practices and experiences are necessarily confined within cultural boundaries and, as such, are void of global resonance.

As was discussed in section 8.5.3 above, there were divergent perspectives between research participants in Buea and their peers in Yaounde in terms of methodological and

interactional features of their lessons. In terms of methodological procedure (see 6.6.1), although both groups of participants agreed on the appropriateness of the three-stage lesson procedure over the NPA, participants in Buea found the extended emphasis and duration of the ‘introduction’ stage in Yaounde to be inappropriate in their context. This contrasted with the perspectives of Yaounde teachers who thought the introduction was the most important part of the lesson and as such demanded much more attention. In terms of interactional patterns (6.3.1) Yaounde participants endorsed group work as appropriate and reported successful practice of group work in their classes arguing that because of the predominance of French in their context, group work activities provided learners opportunities for more interaction in the target language. On the other hand participants in Buea found it inappropriate in their context, reporting practices that were less time consuming. These two areas of divergence suggest that even within the same country, different contexts impose different practices. However, in the light of the findings in section 7.4.1, 7.4.2 and 7.4.4 and the discussions in section 8.5.3 above, the shift in perspectives especially in regards to group work gives the impression that although teachers may hold certain values and practices as appropriate to their contexts, providing input in the form of videoed lessons by their colleagues as well as an enabling psychological environment for them to appreciate, rather than criticise the lessons in the light of insights from their own success stories as well as from students’ perspectives may help teachers develop new insights and attitudes to practices they previously considered inappropriate. In this sense therefore, it could be more relevant to talk about a becoming-appropriate pedagogy (Holliday 1994b) if we must take into account the fact that human enterprise including pedagogic practices is always in a flux.

Besides, a closer look at students' and teachers' perspectives about the practices of Kingsley and Ivo – two teachers responding to the same context – revealed that both teachers' practices were perceived as equally good. Many of the features of good practice described by student participants in both research sites (e.g, shared responsibility for teaching and learning, questioning, group work, creative activities etc) were perceivable in Kingsley's lessons although his students were unable to associate him with these, due to the affective barrier created by his behaviour to them. From teachers' perspectives, Kingsley's practice challenged them to adopt new ways of teaching (see 7.4.4). He used group work very successfully, and during discussions of both lessons in the same class, participants highlighted this as being an example of good practice they will emulate. Although Kingsley did not have the personal skills/attributes that Ivo had, he was still able to put into place a number of techniques and approaches that had a positive effect on his children's learning, and which were recognised as being what should be happening in the context of Yaounde. Participants in Buea felt that Ivo had analysed irregular verbs systematically and some even felt guilty of not having done enough, promising to re-teach their own lessons following Ivo's pattern. The different responses of these two teachers to their context show a further complexity in defining context appropriateness especially in a socially mediated profession like language teaching. It may be necessary to explore other factors, beyond the immediate teaching context, that may impact on the way teachers carry out their job. This may include a more in-depth exploration of their out-of-school experiences, their pedagogic beliefs, their up-bringing and student experience amongst other things. Resolving this complexity may also involve a triangulated action which draws from perspectives of classroom participants, that is, students and teachers, to find common principles and

revisiting these principles from time to time to ensure that both parties are working in tandem.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

9.0. Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I summarise the research findings of this study and outline its main contributions to knowledge and research methodology. I also discuss the implications and limitations of the study and suggest a number of areas for further research.

9.1. Summary of research findings

As was pointed out in chapter two, the repeated call for the search for contextually appropriate forms of ELT pedagogy (e.g. Bax 2003; Holliday 1994a; 1994b; Pennycook 1994; Rubdy 2008; Stritikus 2003) entail giving proper consideration to the main actors of the teaching-learning situation. Holliday (1994b) argues for ELT research that takes into consideration what happens between the people in the classroom, that is, between teachers and students. This study set out to investigate students' and teachers' perspectives and practices of what counted as good and appropriate English language teaching in two English medium primary school contexts in Cameroon. To achieve this, child and adult participants were drawn from six English medium primary schools, three in Yaounde (a francophone town) and three in Buea (an Anglophone town). Data was collected from child-participants through friendship group interviews while data from their teachers was collected through classroom observation and stimulated recall. A further two-day workshop group discussion based on videoed lessons from the six classrooms was organised with 15 teachers in each of the research sites. The findings related to the first two research questions of this study revealed that teachers and students possess shared, but also - in some respects - divergent notions of

good/appropriate ELT pedagogy which are largely different from the NPA methodological procedure being enforced by the MoE, and it is these notions - rather than what the Ministry says - that have the biggest impact on their experiences and practices. In relation to the third research question, research findings revealed that, in exploring insights into their, as well as students' perspectives of good teaching, teachers were able to develop new ideas about appropriate teaching, which insights took on board ideas from children's perspectives as well as successful practices from the videoed lessons of their colleagues.

9.2. Summary of research contributions

In chapter Eight I discussed the main issues emanating from this research in the light of their contribution to current understanding of English language teaching and TT&D for young learners. I indicated that some of the findings of this study resonate with current literature on TEYL from other parts of the world indicating that while the argument for context-appropriate methodology might be relevant, it need not ignore the fact that some pedagogic practices may have global resonance. In this regards, one of the contributions of this study is that it affirms the appropriateness, in Cameroon, of some of current ideas about activities for the young learner classroom expressed in other contexts and in doing this, puts to re-examination ideological constructions of pedagogic practices that are likely to subvert teaching rather than enhance it.

Another contribution of this study is the importance given to the perspectives of child-participants and the way in which these perspectives can be incorporated into those of teachers to achieve a bigger picture and understanding of the dynamics of language teaching in the primary school. Current developments in Exploratory Practice (e.g.

Allwright & Hanks 2009) recommend the incorporation of learners' perspectives in teacher development. This study has the merit of taking children as social actors and as such presents an example of how this can be achieved as well as evidence of the value of students' perspectives in teacher development. By drawing from the perspectives of students and teachers whose opinions have hitherto never been sought in this context, I have been able to gain deeper understanding of the thoughts behind teaching practices in this context. As adults and teachers, we all have personal and shared opinions about pedagogic practices that can motivate young learners in the language classroom. However, it is rarely suggested that our opinions and practices might be at odds with the opinions and interests of the same learners for whom we develop these practices. While it is common practice to elicit feedback on teaching practices from adult learners, there is still little research in which adult researchers and teachers seek, and act upon, children's perspectives about the way teaching should happen in their classrooms. The triangulation of perspectives from learners and teachers in this study as well as the further insights developed from exploring the perspectives of both groups of participants make credible a possible methodology for teachers in Cameroon which although similar in some respects with practices elsewhere, are legitimate to the context. In other words, although some of the good and appropriate practices identified in this study may have a universal resonance, although they may relate with practices in other contexts, they have to be investigated and legitimised within their context of application rather than assumed to be right because they are appropriate elsewhere.

There is a rising body of research which legitimizes practitioners' knowledge and experiences of language teaching and recommends reflective inquiry into these experiences as mechanisms for developing their practices (see section 2.8.2). From a

methodological perspective, this study can be seen as an initial step to using teachers' own practices and experiences as a basis for generating further insights into their understanding of their profession. The response of adult participants to the research workshop format that encouraged them to reflect on their practices on the basis of stimuli in the form of videoed lessons by their peers shows that we can develop teaching by encouraging teachers both individually and collectively to explore principles and experiment with techniques that have worked in the classes of their peers. Adopting an analytical approach that encourages teachers to identify good and appropriate pedagogic features in the practice of their colleagues is relevant to the theory of developing appropriate pedagogy which is not only limited to individual teachers. There is in this approach a potential for peer collaboration amongst teachers which is important in professional development and networking.

Another methodological contribution of this study is what might be referred to as the humanisation of the research process. This study demonstrated that by negotiating mutually respectful relationships with learners and teachers, researchers can access insights from both groups which may complement or challenge existing knowledge. A major reason for the richness of the data collected for this study is that I was able to invest in relationship building prior to, during and after the research and as a result, was able to sustain the trust of both groups of participants. It was this trust and mutual respect that enabled participants to express their views about good and appropriate practices. In this study, students were able to reflect on how (methodology) their lessons were delivered by their teachers; they were also able to identify particular traits and practices in their teachers which impacted on their ability to learn. What is more, their overwhelming endorsement of affective factors of teaching suggests that the current

focus in teacher training and development programmes on the technical aspects of teaching is not all embracing. There may be a need for the literature on YL teacher education to develop a teacher development curriculum that includes strategies for developing affective relationships with young learners. Teachers, on their part, were able to challenge current MoE methodological procedure teacher training practices of inspectors (despite my being their inspector) and to offer their own alternative ideas and practices which, in most cases, were consistent with students' perspectives.

Despite the positive results of developing insights from students' and teachers' perspectives presented in this study, the foregoing discussion of the value of giving attention to students' and teachers' agency in the enactment and dissemination of pedagogic practices only represents an ideal, given the existing power relations within educational circles in Cameroon. In a context like Cameroon where decisions about teaching and learning are mainly imported from donor countries/institutions, enacted at ministry level and imposed on teachers, the major challenge may be that of bringing about a culture change within the MoE itself. While it cannot be claimed that the findings of this study are likely to bring about any immediate change in the existing status quo, the value of these findings in the context of educational reform in Cameroon lies in its contribution to providing research evidence of an alternative approach to teacher development as well as a successful example of an essentially bottom-up model for the development and dissemination of context-appropriate ELT practices. Unless there is such evidence, it may be even more difficult to argue for a change of culture within the educational system.

9.3. Implications of the study

The process and results of this research study have implications for researchers, policy makers, teacher trainers and teachers.

A. Researchers

While there is overwhelming consensus that top down models of pedagogic innovation are inappropriate and that there is need for a more practitioner friendly research approach that builds from the socio-political experiences that participants bring to the classroom, studies that give importance to the perspectives and practices of children and teachers are still sparse in the ELT field. Studies that explore learners' perspectives do so only to complement adult perspectives or to throw light on already existing phenomena. What is more, although such studies end with a recommendations section which points to the importance of considering children's perspectives, such research has the principal value of informing our knowledge. The research procedure and findings of this study could provide researchers with a possible model for researching contextually appropriate English language teaching pedagogy from the bottom up and for effectively investigating making use of the perspectives of students and teachers to effect change. Besides, the use of cases in social science research is not new nor are the research instruments I employed, unique to this study. However, the specific triangulation of both the data collection instruments and participants' perspectives could be a sensible way of conducting research that both informs theory and develops practice.

B. Policy makers and Teacher trainers

The rich descriptive and interpretative data collected for this study could provide a huge potential for the promotion of ecologically relevant teacher development programmes as

well as language teaching policy enactment and dissemination. The findings of this study suggest that policy may effectively benefit from adopting a bottom up approach that draws from the perspectives and practices of teachers and learners in ways that have been hitherto neglected in research. Rather than define policy at ministry level and blame teachers for their failure/inability to apply such policy in their classrooms, policy makers could adopt the enhancement paradigm used in this study as a way of establishing an inventory of teachers' preferred practices which could serve as a framework for incorporating new ideas and practices, rather than dismiss teachers' practices as inappropriate. As was revealed in this study, MoE policy and teacher training in Cameroon still treat teaching as an exact science and teachers are expected to 'get it right'. However, drawing from the perspectives of students and teachers, it may not matter what the precise stages of a lesson are as both groups of participants showed a preference for micro-level activities. Policy makers and teacher trainers may use these findings as a basis for developing looser guidelines from the positives of teachers' current practices as well as from the points of convergence between students' and teachers' perspectives of good/appropriate ELT. For example, the fact that teachers and students see questioning as good practice gives a basis for developing this practice further. Also points of divergence between students and teachers' perspectives could serve as input for encouraging teachers to reflect on their practices. For example, in this study, drawing teachers' attention to students' perspectives on group work and showing them an example of group work in a large class enabled them revise their initial misgivings about the practice.

C. Teachers

This study has far-reaching implications for teachers as well; focusing on the positives of the practices of other teachers could serve as a starting point for developing teachers' self-esteem as professionals in their own right and to explore their own teaching in the light of their successes as well. Also, teachers could be encouraged by the workshop process and findings of this study to engage in positive networking with their colleagues. In this process, they could mutually encourage each other and develop their practices by identifying, analysing and emulating good practice. In addition this study presents a justification for seeking learners' perspectives about good teaching. Teachers could learn a lot more about language teaching by seeking and reflecting on students' perspectives and using insights from these to develop their teaching.

9.4. Issues, dilemmas and limitations

Ideally, I would have preferred to extend the scope of this study to cover the 10 regions of Cameroon given the multi-cultural nature of the country. It would also have been preferable to undertake a longer field study so as to get deeper insights into the realities in the field. Unfortunately, because of practical constraints of funding and time I could only maximise the short period within which this study was conducted. Besides, in analysing the various data, I found areas where further follow-up interviews would have clarified my understanding, but it was impossible for me to do this given my very tight schedule in Cameroon and the practical and financial challenges of contacting individual teachers by phone. A major limitation of this study is the fact that, like all research based on reported perspectives, it cannot be claimed that the workshop had a real transformational effect on teachers' practices as they expressed it in their feedback. Teachers were enthusiastic and excited about the workshop and gave very positive

feedback but we do not know how they followed this up. Talking about positive practices and saying what they will like to emulate from the good practices of their peers might not directly translate into change in their own practice. Ideally, a systematic follow up would be needed to ensure that a workshop like the one in this study effectively achieves what teachers say it can. Secondly, despite agreeing with children's perspectives and promising to modify their teaching to incorporate students' preferred practices, none of the adult participants actually stated that they will, in the future, ask their students advice on teaching practices. This suggests that while teachers were able to learn from and accept students' ideas in this study, there is still need for research in this direction to explicitly address with, or elicit from teachers, the possibilities and merits of seeking students' perspectives. Unfortunately, it was only during the data analysis phase that I realised this and it was not possible to return to these teachers again. Thirdly, because of data overload important decisions had to be taken in determining which data would be given priority. As a result, there were interesting insights in the children's data which challenged adult perspectives for example (see Kuchah & Pinter 2012) but which could not be included in this study. Also it can be suggested that basing my analysis on stimulated recall rather than on the workshop data might have produced slightly different outcomes, but in the light of my goal of identifying consensus perspectives, I had to take the difficult but pragmatic decision of basing my analysis of teachers' perspectives on the workshop discussion data. Fourthly, although this study benefited from its focus on the positive, it could be argued that doing so might create the impression that all videoed lessons were without shortcomings. My assumption in adopting a positive focus was that for a context where teachers' actions are often assessed from a deficit paradigm, a pendulum swing is necessary, at least to set the pace for an eventual balanced approach to pedagogic assessment. However, it is

possible that this might lead to the adoption and fossilisation of some bad practices in the lessons. Finally, like most naturalistic qualitative research, the findings of this study cannot be generalised nor can they be directly applied to other contexts, not even within the same country. However, as Edge and Richards (1998) argue, this study can ‘produce understanding of one situation which someone with knowledge of another situation may well be able to make use of.’ (p.345)

9.5. Suggestions for further research

The findings, contributions, implications and limitations of the present study point to different areas of complementary research, some of which I recommend below:

- To further validate and give this study a global resonance, I would encourage that similar research should be undertaken in other contexts. Such research would need to maintain a non-judgemental stance to ensure that the understandings of teachers and students emerge clearly.
- There is also need for research that builds on the methodological approach adopted in this study but goes on to explicitly address the importance of seeking students’ perspectives. This could be in the form of action research or exploratory practice involving teachers and students identifying common interests (rather than problems) and designing a roadmap for developing these interests so that teaching and learning could make the most benefit from these shared interests.
- This research highlighted the place of children’s agency in language teaching and teacher education. It is necessary to explore this area of research further, given that children’s perspectives and role in teaching and learning is still under-

explored in language teaching despite arguments for learner-centredness. A further development could be to involve students in developing perspectives not only about good teaching, but also about other aspects of learning including learning materials like textbooks. Exploring the potential for developing learner autonomy with young learners in large class and under-resourced contexts like this one would also add to our understanding of context appropriate practices.

Epilogue

As I conclude this thesis, I would like to reflect on how the process and results of the study have impacted on me. More than two years separate the final write up of the thesis from the actual data collection, but the experiences of the field work are still very vivid in my mind. The children who took part in this study are probably now starting their third year in secondary school and their teachers might still be teaching the same classes with other children or might have been transferred to other parts of the country. Yet, it still feels like the research was undertaken yesterday; I can still hear the distinctive voices of my research participants. The fact that I engaged in this research with my hybrid personality of teacher trainer, policy maker and researcher meant that I was not only doing research for the purpose of obtaining a degree, but had to be quite sensitive to the impact that my attitude, research procedure and findings could make on the language teaching landscape in Cameroon. Yet I did not envisage that the research experience would influence my own ideas about my profession and research interests in the way it eventually did.

Having worked through the ranks of the professional ladder in Cameroon with a rather unusual speed, I took for granted that I had a sound understanding of what would make TEYL interesting. I knew that it was important to build rapport with young learners, but I had never thought in my own practice with children as well as in my teacher training, that children could be so assertive in their views about how they want to be taught. In the course of my interviews with one group of children, I took the cue from the excitement with which they talked about the pictures they had drawn of their teachers and asked them if they would like drawing in the language class. The response to this

was ‘*Are you mad? Are we children?*’ and ‘*That is nonsense*’. This convinced me that I had obtained from learners the level of confidence that enabled them to challenge adult perspectives, but more importantly to assert their ideas. For children who have never been interviewed before about matters of interest to their education, I have not stopped marvelling at what our profession could achieve if teachers, teacher trainers, policy makers and researchers gave children greater opportunities to contribute to developments in language teaching.

In the course of my PhD studies, one of my primary participants (Alberto) lost his wife; another (Grace) died at a time when I was analysing data related to her videoed lesson; Martha was appointed head teacher; Josephine took up an administrative role in a district inspectorate of education and George is now also running a children’s programme with a local radio station in Yaounde. The fact that I have been kept up-to-date with their lows and highs and that I have shared their pain and joy makes me feel that my research procedure was much more than just a scientific endeavour. There could be, in social qualitative research, a potential for developing human relationships that grow beyond the research and that sow seeds for other forms of human development.

As I mentioned in chapter three (3.4.2.), at the end of phase two of my data collection, I ran a one day seminar in Buea and Yaounde. I was also invited by the children to teach them and effectively taught in one class (George’s). The seminar in Yaounde was organised by the local Teachers Association and was attended by more than 60 teachers including my research workshop participants. One of the two sessions I gave focused on teaching and assessing composition writing and was based on my MA research. The significant result of this workshop was that during the marking of the official certificate

examination that year (June 2011) it was decided that only teachers who had attended my seminar were allowed to mark composition writing in the Yaounde centre. Such a decision, coming 4 years after I conducted the research only keeps ablaze my hope that this research endeavour will eventually impact on the Cameroonian, and other educational systems. My experience of teaching the children (in George's class) also led to an agreement to develop their own reading materials; I have reported on this in a webinar for the IATEFL YLT SIG and am now using data from children's texts, artwork and comprehension questions for an article for the *ELT Journal*. What comes out of this experience is the fact that given the right enabling conditions, children are capable of developing ideas and materials that would respond to syllabus demands and resolve the issue of lack of materials.

I cannot possibly say all about what this research endeavour has meant to me, but I can only sum up everything by saying that in working with children, I developed both as a teacher and as a parent; in working with teachers, I learned to be a better trainer, and in working with both groups of participants, I learned to be a better policy maker and researcher. I believe that the process of investigating a context can influence that context in the same way as it can influence the investigator. For me, the main lesson learned can be found in these words by Albert Einstein (1879 – 1955): 'the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same kind of thinking we were at when we created them' (cited in Mohr & Watkins 2002). And I can only hope that the level of positive attitude to the agency of both children and teachers that permeated this study will be allowed to blossom in this, and other contexts.

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Appendix 1

Letter of recommendation

Teacher proposal

FROM: Pouchanox Bate

TO: hkuchah@yahoo.com

Message flagged

Monday, 10 May 2010, 10:20

Message Body

Dear Mr Kuchah,

Following your request through Mr N [REDACTED], I am proposing Mr A [REDACTED], my class 6 teacher for your research. Mr A [REDACTED] has worked with me for 7 years now and has taught class 6 for the last four years. He is a very dynamic young teacher with a lot of experience.

He has marked the common entrance and FSLC for four years now and has a lot of experience in preparing children for the exams. Since I appointed him to teach in class six, the school and parents have been very satisfied with our overall performance in official exams. We are currently the best government primary school in the south west region and parents continue to send many children to our school.

I am sure that Mr A [REDACTED] will live up to your expectation as he is used to being observed by inspectors and other teachers of the school for whom he is an outstanding example of motivation commitment and achievement.

I will be happy to give you further details of this choice and do accept my gratitude for choosing my school for your research.

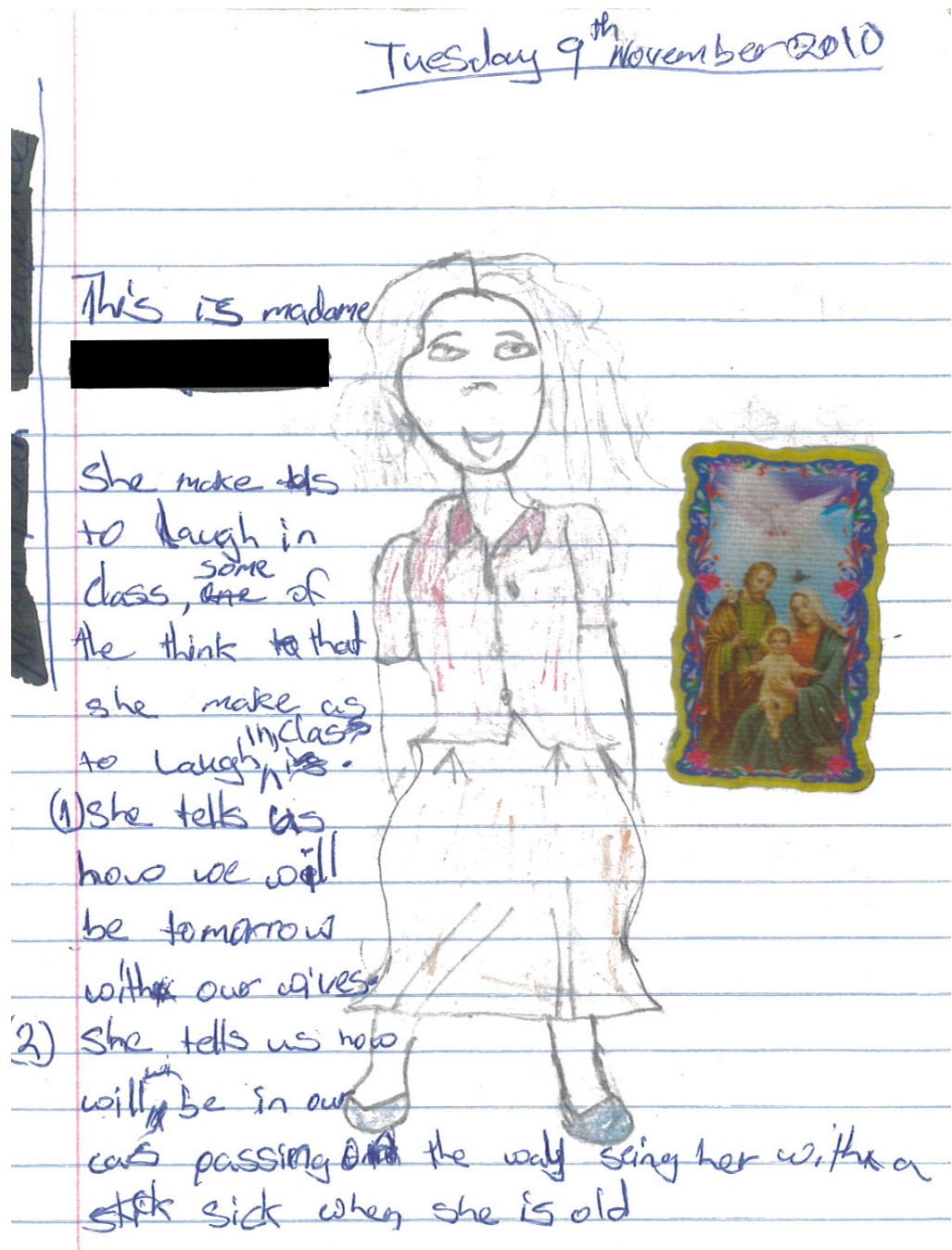
Yours sincerely,

Mr [REDACTED]

HM, [REDACTED]

Appendix 2

Child-Participant drawings and written assessment of teachers





Things my madame likes .

She likes quietness, she likes to play with children, to go to church, to read books and she likes fun .

Things my madame hates or does not like .

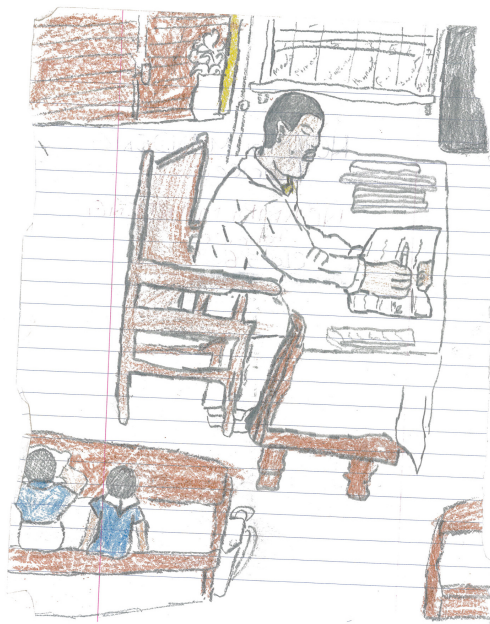
She hates noise, she hates people who fight, she hates stubborn children, beating children and she also hates thieves.

The things I like about my madame.

She teaches well and we understand, she advises us like his/her children, she makes fun, she's very neat, she is beautiful.

The things I hate about my madame .

She likes to beat, she likes to shout at someone when the person do something wrong, she likes to abuse, she hates us to be speaking pidgin in class .



TO MR. HARRY.

My best teacher is Mr. Harry.
I like him because:

- 1) He is too calm.
- 2) He asks question and answer.
- 3) He asks us if we have understood he is teaching and if you have not understood you ask a question and he will answer over and over.
- 4) I like him because he is very very smiles when he is teaching.
- 5) He does not like noise.
- 6) He is always friendly with us.
- 7) He likes teaching.
- 8) He wibs when you do something wrong.
- 9) He has all qualities of a good teacher.
- 10) And finally I like him because he always say there is time for playing and there is time for learning.

Thank you

Appendix 3

Child-participant interview schedule

Pre-interview tasks:

- Draw your teacher and write something you think he/or she is most likely to say to you in class
- Look at your English exercise book and select the most interesting lesson your teacher has taught you this term.

Interview schedule

- Tell me why you drew your teacher in this way and why you selected this statement.
- What other statements would you have written?
- Tell me about your most interesting English lesson this term.
 - What was it about?
 - Why did you like it? What did the teacher do during the lesson that made you understand the lesson easily?
- Will you say your teacher is a good or a bad teacher? Why?
- If you were an English teacher, how will you teach your pupils? What are the kinds of things you will do in an English class?
- If your teacher asks your opinion about what he can do to make his/her English lessons more interesting, what advice will you give him/her?
- Tell me about the best teacher you have ever had in primary school. What are some of the things he/she did that made you like him/her?
- Imagine that your school wants to employ a new English teacher and the head teacher selects some teachers to teach you so that you can select the best one. What things do you think a teacher will have to do, so you can select him/her?
- Complete this sentence with your own personal ideas/opinion:
- I enjoy my English lessons when my teacher_____

Appendix 4

Observation field notes.

School/Teacher: Kingsley

Date: 19/10/10

Duration of lesson: 50 Minutes

Descriptive notes	Reflective notes/questions
<p>T asks pupils to stand, sit, stand, and sit. T writes 'likes/dislikes' on board and asks pupils to say things they like and things they dislike. He insists on using 'I like/dislike...' and saying why?</p> <p>Only two pupils talk. Then silence.</p> <p>T: 'Hands up, those who'll like to be teachers in future.' About 10 hands up. T elicits reasons why they'll want to become teachers; only one pupil provides a reason. T asks those who want to become footballers and all boys raise their hands. T asks which footballer they'll want to be like and all answer 'Samuel Eto'o Fils' [Cameroon top footballer]. (about 3 minutes)</p> <p>T asks about dislikes. A few hands up and one response from a pupil who dislikes to be hit by someone.</p> <p>T wants to see those who dislike coming to school; those who are in school because they have been forced by their parents. No hand up. (less than 1 minute)</p> <p>T writes a list of 5 school subjects on the board (and says stop noise repeatedly without looking at the class. Then he turns round and asks pupils to look at the board quietly. Cleans the board a few seconds after. Then asks pupils to say what they saw on the board.</p> <p>Two pupils list the subjects they saw, and T repeats the list after pupils.</p> <p>T: 'What do we call the things we have just listed?' Pupils: 'Subjects.'</p> <p>T: after explaining that these are some of the subjects studied in school T announces the topic of the day 'Writing a composition</p>	<p>T's change of questioning strategy! Now asks a leading question. Is it because he thinks the other question was difficult? Is there a particular reason for talking of teachers and footballers?</p> <p>Note: T repeats all answers provided by pupils even though pupils are loud enough to be heard. Is there any reason for this?</p> <p>Again, T changes line of questioning as soon as one pupil talks about being hit. Why does he move from this? Is there any reason for directing pupils' dislikes? From group interview, I understand that he hits pupils, so is this an avoidance strategy?</p> <p>Was there any need to write the subjects on the board and wipe them a few seconds later? Could he not simply ask them to list the subjects? Time fact.</p> <p>In previous reading lesson, T worked through different general questions before announcing topic of the day. Seems to be</p>

<p>about the topic “My best subject.” Then writes on board</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Productive writing</u> <u>My best subject</u></p> <p>T: insists that although there are 13 subjects in the timetable, they can only choose from the list of 5 he wrote on the board. [A parent comes to talk to teacher by the door for about a minute]</p> <p>T asks pupils to make sentences with the subject the like best. A pupil says ‘I like mathematics’ but T insists that she links it to the topic. Pupil says ‘My best subject is mathematics.’ And T repeats the sentence. Another pupil makes the same sentence with ‘history’. T asks pupils to raise their hands as he names their best subject, mathematics, history, English language.</p> <p>T comes back to pupil who said her best subject was mathematics and asks her to share with the class when she started liking mathematics. Pupil says she started liking mathematics in class 6 [present class]. T: How will mathematics help you in future? P: Mathematics will help me to calculate distance if I become a pilot. Other reasons are given. T: writes a plan/checklist on board for Pupils to write an introduction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Name of subject? - When did you start liking it? - How will it help you in future? <p>T splits each of the four rows into two groups, appointing a leader for each of the 8 groups</p> <p>T asks pupils to name the parts of a composition: Introduction, body and conclusion. Then T explains that in next class, focus will be on writing the body of the composition. T: tries to organise sitting in groups. Give so many discipline-related and conflicting instructions.</p> <p>T insists that every group member participates because they’ll have to write</p>	<p>a consistent pattern in lessons, announcing topic 7-9 minutes into the lesson.</p> <p>Why did teacher limit the number of subjects? What if their best subject was not in the list?</p> <p>I can understand that T wants pupils to be consistent with the topic, but there seems to be a confusion from the introduction on likes/dislikes which makes pupil to use ‘I like...’ instead of ‘My best subject is...’</p> <p>Now limited the list to 3 subjects!</p> <p>There is very little space for children to move. The groups are too large but I can see each pupil trying to say a word. Group leaders have assumed role of secretary and moderator. Group members are actively involved in giving ideas; correcting sentences etc but there are some ‘sleepers’.</p> <p>I didn’t see T monitoring/supporting individual groups although he walked</p>
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<p>individually.</p> <p>T stops group work after about 15 minutes and asks pupils to go back to their seats. Each group leader reads out their text. For each presentation, T identifies parts that respond to the checklist and which parts are not included.</p> <p>T takes two of the introductions, the shortest and the longest and reads them aloud. Then invites pupils to 'blend' both together to make a complete introduction.</p> <p>T asks a pupil to write their introduction on the board. As she writes, T encourages others to look up because they will all have to contribute ideas to make introduction better.</p> <p>After pupil writes intro on board, T indicates that the text could be even better if other ideas were added. T encourages pupils to make necessary additions. (see initial draft and final text below.)</p> <p>Initial draft. <i>In our class we do many subjects, but I will like to write a composition about our best subject.</i></p> <p>Final text <i>In our class, we do many subjects like mathematics, English language, geography, history, just to name a few. But I will like to write about my best subject which is mathematics.</i></p> <p>T explains that the introduction has two main parts: a list of subjects don in class and her best subject. In the body, pupils will write about when they started liking mathematics. They will state the name of the person who made them like mathematics In the next paragraph they will say how mathematics will help them in future.</p>	<p>round the class looking at what they were doing. Two groups produced only two to three sentences; I think they would have benefitted if the teacher had gone to support them.</p> <p>This is very time consuming! How do teachers manage time?</p> <p>This is probably the climax of the lesson, more and more pupils are putting up their hands to contribute to the introduction. I can see a very warm teacher-pupil rapport now which is contrary to the start of the lesson and the children interviews.</p> <p>I think the lesson started up with T dominating talk, but from the start of group work to the end, it was mainly pupils talking.</p> <p>I need to ask T about checklist. It was entirely provided by T, unlike in Kome's (Yaounde 2) lesson where I saw him work with pupils to establish a checklist. Any reason for this?</p>
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Appendix 5

Data Coding

Kinivo: Child group interview

Research Question: What are learners' perceptions about the practice of their teachers?

Raw data	Coded for...
<p>Harry: Alright, in any case, how do you want your teacher to behave, even if it is not Mr Kingsley? I want everybody to say something. Let's start with you KinivoG2. How do you want your teacher to behave?</p> <p>KinivoG2: I want him to be kind to pupils and not to be sad and angry at every moment.</p> <p>Harry: What does he do when he is sad? Does he insult you?</p> <p>KinivoG2: No</p> <p>KinivoG3, KinivoG1 and KinivoG5: (whispering aloud) Yes sir</p> <p>Harry: KinivoG2 is talking. Everybody will have their chance to talk. What does he do? Does he whip?</p> <p>KinivoG2: Yes</p> <p>Harry: He does that often?</p> <p>KinivoG3: Very very often</p> <p>Harry: He very often does what?</p> <p>All: whips.</p> <p>Harry: I see. KinivoG2 said she wants him to be kind, do you agree with her?</p> <p>All: Yes sir</p> <p>Harry: So how do you expect a kind teacher to behave? What are some of the things a kind person does? I mean a kind teacher.</p> <p>KinivoG4:</p> <p>KinivoG4: Like when you greet him, he has to answer and he should not be sad at every moment because that is what is making him angry.</p> <p>Harry: Okay, KinivoG1 how do you expect a teacher to behave?</p> <p>KinivoG1: I want him to be a responsible person</p> <p>KinivoG3: RESPONSIBLE!</p> <p>Harry: KinivoG3, you will have your turn to speak, now its KinivoG1's turn. KinivoG1, what do you mean when you say he has to be responsible?</p> <p>KinivoG1: I mean that, I want him to be serious in everything he's doing because when he is teaching, before he starts a lesson he must beat somebody (KinivoG3 shakes head in disapproval).</p> <p>Harry: Is that true KinivoG3?</p> <p>KinivoG3: He can ask somebody to kneel down.</p> <p>Harry: So KinivoG3, you said he does not beat all the time but he either beats or he punishes?</p> <p>KinivoG3: He beats and punishes</p> <p>Harry: Ah, he beats all the time and punishes?</p> <p>KinivoG1: (to me) No, no, no, you have not finished with me.</p> <p>Harry: Okay, KinivoG1 go on.</p> <p>KinivoG1: I was saying that when he must start a lesson he must first beat a person or punish. So I want him to change because...let me go</p>	<p>Affective features: kindness, merry-looking, not angry</p> <p>Whipping would be an example of their perception of bad teaching practice!</p> <p>Affection, warmth. Responding to greetings</p> <p>Beating and punishment as bad practices</p> <p>Comparing 2 teachers></p>

<p>back to Mr Ivo. If you see Mr Ivo and Mr Kingsley</p> <p>Harry: Who is Mr Ivo</p> <p>KinivoG1: He is our teacher of mathematics</p> <p>Harry: Okay</p> <p>KinivoG1: If you see Mr Kingsley ad Mr Ivo, if you see their behaviour it will be very difficult to think that Mr Kingsley is like Mr Ivo.</p> <p>Harry: Are they different?</p> <p>KinivoG1: very different.</p> <p>Harry: How does Mr Ivo behave?</p> <p>KinivoG1: Mr Ivo behaves like a normal person (general laughter)</p> <p>KinivoG4: So Mr Kingsley is not normal? (general laughter)</p> <p>KinivoG1: No, I am not saying that he is not normal, sorry. Mr Ivo doesn't want that this must this; if you want me to tell you, he doesn't want money. He wants just that the child should understand very well and that the child must pass. He also promised us that everybody must pass in the class and I believe him, but if it were Mr Kingsley, I will not believe. Because Mr Kingsley, if you see him...</p> <p>Harry: He wants money?</p> <p>KinivoG1: Yes</p> <p>Harry: And how does he get money</p> <p>KinivoG1: He gets money by forcing us.</p> <p>Harry: To do what?</p> <p>KinivoG1: Like on Saturday he says that he is going to put a video so that we will see television which will teach us how to do something. So he is pushing people to come...</p> <p>KinivoG4: (Whispering to me). Because we will pay.</p> <p>KinivoG1: ...So when he just told us like that, I reasoned faster that he wanted money because if it is Mr Ivo who told us like that he will say that, just come like that, just come like that, but the only think he will say is that 'don't come with you dresses' that's all. He will not say again anything. Don't come with your dresses, you must...</p> <p>ALL: come with your uniform</p> <p>KinivoG1: Because he doesn't want that they say that a child of Class 6 a in (name of school) has fallen or has collapsed and the child is wearing any kind of dress that they cannot identify him, he (Mr Ivo) will not accept. But Mr Kingsley, I don't think that he has his place here, I don't think so.</p> <p>Harry: What do you think, KinivoG5?</p> <p>KinivoG5: I think that I don't want that Mr Kingsley should be anytime angry. I want that when they greet him, he should answer.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Harry: Oh. Well let us talk about the way he taught the lesson. Do you think that the lesson was very clear for you to understand, KinivoG4?</p> <p>KinivoG4: um hum.</p> <p>Harry: What are some of the things that he did in that lesson which you liked? I know we have all said things that he does that we don't like and I agree with you, a teacher is not supposed to be beating children or even insulting and punishing them. It is very wrong. But tell me some of the things he did in that lesson, that were good; that made you understand and remember the lesson. (KinivoG1 fidgeting)</p>	<p>Children's idea of a good/an ideal teacher</p> <p>Caring teacher? Examination directed</p> <p>Again, bad teaching practice here. Under this main category of bad teaching practices, we may have punishment, exploiting children (asking them for money)</p> <p>Parental quality> caring for learners' wellbeing even outside school</p> <p>greeting or what could be categorised as a friendly behaviour to be a good teaching practice.</p> <p>A strategy to involve the learners? Engaging them?</p> <p>Explaining, giving examples, exercises</p>
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<p>KinivoG4: Will you also observe Mr Ivo when he is teaching?</p> <p>Harry: Do you want me to observe him too?</p> <p>All: Yes sir</p> <p>Harry: Okay, I will, I promise. Okay tell me about your best lesson now, it doesn't matter who taught the lesson.</p> <p>KinivoG4: (with insistence and excitement) Mr Ivo.</p> <p>Harry: I will start again with KinivoG3.</p> <p>KinivoG3: My best English lesson is 'polite expressions'.</p> <p>Harry: Good. What are the things your teacher did, which made you to like the lesson?</p> <p>KinivoG3: He first of all made us to laugh a bit, when we were going to the table. Then he asked us our opinions so that he can take some and write on the board and make us to laugh.</p> <p>Harry: What did he do to make you laugh?</p> <p>KinivoG3: He started...when he asked a question and then a girl never stood up very well, so he told the girl to stand up very well. He made us to laugh by walking and bending his back because the girl never wanted to stand straight. He said that if you don't know how to stand straight, when you grow old you will be walking like that. And then he said he did not want that we will start walking like that, so we must stand up straight. And also when he is teaching, he wants everybody to understand. If you don't understand, you put your hand up and ask him a question. Anytime he finish teaching a lesson, he must give an exercise to see whether everybody has understood what he has taught.</p>	<p>making them laugh ... or could be interpreted as humour - a good teaching practice.</p> <p>Engaging strategies: asking for their opinions</p> <p>Humour in the classroom</p> <p>Very caring teacher – it could be interpreted as the teacher ensuring that learners' are learning (good teaching practice). Encourages student questions Giving practice exercises to check understanding</p>
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Appendix 6

Focus Group (Research) workshop timetable

**Research seminar/workshop on teaching English to young learners.
Buea 25 to 26 March, 2011.**

Programme of Activities

Day 1: Friday

8:30 – 9:00 Welcome and introductions

9:00 – 10:30: Lesson 1 (Kingsley)

10:30 – 12:00: Lesson 2 (Ivo)

12:00 – 12:30: Coffee break

12:30 – 14:00: Lesson 3 (Martha)

14:00 – 15:30: Lesson 4 (George)

15:30 – 16:45: Launch and closing

Day 2: Saturday

8:00 – 9:30: Lesson 5 (Josephine)

9:30 – 11:00: Lesson 6 (Grace)

11:00 – 11:30: Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00: Lesson 3 (Alberto)

13:00 – 14:30: General discussion

14:30 – 15:30: Workshop report & participants' impressions

15:30 – 16:30: Launch and closing

Appendix 7

Summary of data collection schedule

First trip to Cameroon – 04 October to 18 December 2010		
Dates	Place	Activity
04 to 23 Oct, 2010	Yaoundé: all three classes alternately	Sitting in class, simulating recording and interacting with pupils. Focus Group Interviews with pupils and trial Interviews with 4 teachers and Observation
25 Oct to 8 Nov 2010	Yaounde: all three classes	Filming, observation of lessons and Stimulated Recall Interviews as below.
01 Nov, 2010	Yaounde: Kingsley	Stimulated Recall Interview
06 Nov, 2010	Yaoundé: George	Stimulated Recall Interview
08 Nov 2010	Yaoundé: Ivo and Martha	Stimulated Recall Interview
10 to 27 Nov 2010	Buea: all three classes alternately	Sitting in class, simulating recording and interacting with pupils. Focus Group Interviews with pupils and trial Interviews with 3 teachers and Observation
29 Nov to 11 Dec, 2010	Buea: all three classes	Filming, observation of lessons and Stimulated Recall Interviews as below
11 Dec 2010	Buea: Grace	Stimulated Recall Interview
17 Dec 2010	Buea: Josephine	Stimulated Recall Interview
18 Dec 2010	Buea: Alberto	Stimulated Recall Interview
Second trip to Cameroon: 18 March to 3 May 2011		
Dates	Place	Activity
25 – 26 March 2011	Buea	2-day workshop and Focus Group Interviews with 15 group 2 teachers
Second term holiday period: 27 March to 10 April, 2011		
22 – 23 April 2011	Yaounde	2-days workshop and Focus Group Interviews with 15 group 2 teachers
27 April 2011	Buea	Training workshop on teaching and assessing literacy skills, requested by teachers
29 April 2011	Yaounde	Training workshop on teaching and assessing literacy skills, requested by teachers

Appendix 8

Trialling of data collection instruments

a) Children Group interview

The trialling of the children's interview took place with two groups of children from two classes in the same school as that of the teacher with whom the SR was trialled. The children were of the same age range, linguistically diverse backgrounds and class with those interviewed in the study. In the first trial, I asked the children to draw their teacher and write any memorable or funny thing he/she always says/ever said. This helped me initiate discussion with them but it was so difficult to tie them down to English language lessons. In the other class, I asked them to bring along their English language exercise books and talk to me about a particular lesson they enjoyed. This time, it was easier to focus on the language component of their learning, yet the conversation wasn't as exciting as the former. A second challenge was that of group numbers and gender differences. In the first trialling, I worked with a mixed group of 8 boys and girls but the discussions proved difficult to manage either because it became noisy at some points or because the boys dominated the girls. In the second trialling, I reduced the group to 5 children with 3 girls and 2 boys, but the dominance of the boys and inhibitions from the girls was still visible even though the group was easier to manage. On the basis of these observations, I decided to work with separate groups of 5 boys and 5 girls in each class, but also to use drawings and the English exercise book together as a reference point to the interviews.

In terms of the content and actual conduct of the interview, there were no significant changes to the initial interview guide as I was quite familiar with the discourse of this level of learners and allowed them to express themselves as much as possible. However, I learnt from the trialling that I needed to constantly remind the children of the purpose of my study as well as reassure them of the confidentiality of their responses. I also learnt to cope with deviations from the main discussion and to manage these in ways that would not frustrate interviewees.

b) Observation and Stimulated Recall

Classroom observation and stimulated recall were trialled twice, first with a Year Five teacher in a school in Coventry (UK) where I worked as a volunteer reading mentor and later with a Class six teacher in Yaounde (Cameroon). In terms of the levels both teachers taught, it can be said that they had fairly the same profile with the teachers in the study. However, it must be said that the UK teacher was far more qualified (with a degree and PGCE) compared to the Cameroonian teachers although their years of experience were about the same. As I was not allowed to video or even audio-record the lesson in the UK, I depended entirely on my observation notes for the conduct of the stimulated recall. The trialling in the UK therefore helped me practice my observation skills and the subsequent stimulated recall interview was limited by the fact that the teacher could hardly remember the ‘episodes’ in the lesson I was referring to even though the SR followed immediately after the lesson. This, in a way justified my resolve to video lessons as a clue to both the teacher and me, during the stimulated recall. The second trialling in Cameroon was conducted with an experienced teacher who also allowed me video the lesson for the SRI. The trialling in Cameroon helped me to (1) assess the extent to which I could rely on the teacher to identify and explain ‘critical moments’ in the lesson; (2) identify and describe patterns of classroom interaction, teaching strategies, teacher’s rapport building strategies, and other events in the lesson that the teacher did not refer to, but which could help throw light on his perspective; (3) manipulate my video and audio recording equipment in ways that were not disruptive; (4) practice using stimulated recall; and (5) prepare follow up questions for the main SR and subsequent focus group interviews with peers.

Appendix 9

Sample workshop participants' written feedback

My impressions on the Pedagogic/Research Workshop on teaching English to young learners has been very enriching. For two days the exercise has made me to learn alot, in so many areas in teaching English language. In lessons like Composition I never knew it could be taught in segments, also in the reading Comprehension lesson I learnt the questions for evaluation can be read aloud. The irregular verbs were treated so well and detaily that I have to treat it that same way in my class.

I sincerely hope all our seminars will be like this workshop and I hope there will be a forum working with you again. Above all the workshop has given us the opportunity to see the teaching and learning process in the francophone area.

Thanks very much for the organisation of this workshop, even though we have paid no participation fees we had a heavy item 11 (eleven). God bless you.

Appraisals on Seminar/Workshop held on 23/04/11

To me, this workshop has enriched me not only intellectually but also socially and morally. It is really wonderful when a resource person takes upon himself to be on the side of his learners than on the "big side".

What thrills me most is that, we watched lessons of other teachers and did not criticise, but appraised. That is throwing or not even looking at the negative things but the positive ones which we could copy. From here, I will go back to my class, conscious of the fact that I have to consider first the idea a child has put across and not nailing him for grammatical errors.

Also, I have learnt a lot from the colleagues whose lessons we watched and I will implement the following in my class:

⇒ I will make sure that at the end of every lesson, I find out my learner's take home message.

⇒ Learn to be more relaxed with children such that I could understand them.

more and for Communication among us to be one on one.

⇒ Accept corrections from children without Prejudice.

~~⇒ It has~~

To me if workshops like this are organised frequently it will enrich the teachers so much and the teacher will find satisfaction in his job. Not only did I learn from the lessons we watched, or from our resource person but also from other colleagues. Through their opinions of the lessons I learnt how I could better teach.

In fact, I leave from here today a different person and I believe that I will be a better teacher from today.

Appendix 10

Sample Parental consent form

Government English Primary School
Yaounde.
26 Oct. 2010

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCHER TO PARENTS.

Dear parent/guardian,

I am writing to introduce to you Mr Harry Kuchah who is currently doing a research in English language teaching in primary schools in Cameroon. Mr Kuchah has been authorised by the Ministry of Basic Education to do research at the University of Warwick and it is hoped that being a National Pedagogic Inspector in the Ministry of Basic Education, the findings of his study will help us improve the education we give your children.

Your child _____ has been selected as one of those who will be interviewed for the study. For this reason, I wish to inform you that he/she will be required to stay back after school on MONDAY to take part in the group interview which will run from 3.00pm to 4.00pm. If you require alternative transportation for your child, we will be happy to provide that.

If, however you are not happy with this, do let us know before FRIDAY. After this date, we will consider that you have given your consent even if you do not return the consent form.

Tick the box that corresponds to your decision and please sign before returning this letter to us.

I agree ☒ *John*
I disagree ☐

Thanks for your kind collaboration.

Head teacher
Ngane


Appendix 11a

NPA Lesson plan

Individual lesson notes on English language for Thursday 16/11/2010

Name of Teacher: _____ School: _____

Class: 6

Enrolment: 89

Average Age: 11

years

Topic: Pronouns

Lesson: Relative Pronouns

Duration: 45 minutes

Specific Objectives: From reading various sentences and discussing them, pupils, by the end of the lesson should be able to identify and use relative pronouns appropriately.

Entry Behaviour: Pupils can name various kinds of pronouns.

Didactic materials: Reader and Flipchart.

Reference: Tata, P.M. (2009), Essential English for Exam Success. Bamenda: Emengu International Ltd.

Stages	Rationale	Main point of the matter	Teachers' activities	Pupils' activities
Revision 3mins	To name kinds of pronouns	There are many kinds of pronouns. What is a pronoun? Which are the different kinds of pronouns you know?	Teacher asks oral questions to pupils.	Pupils give oral answers individually.
Didactic situation 5mins	To read silently	1. It was him whom we met in the market. 2. Please take your pens. 3. Your parents are living in Buea 4. Many people whose parents are still living are lazy.	- presents sentences on a flipchart. - asks pupils to read them silently.	Pupils do as instructed.
Research, 5mins	To formulate hypotheses	Look at the sentences again. Which one shows possession or ownership? - How are sentences 2 and 3 different from sentences 1 and 4? - What is a relative pronoun? Name 3 examples of relative pronouns.	- Guides pupils in the formulation of hypotheses through guiding questions.	They formulate their hypotheses
Verification	To verify	- They show possession of something, e.g your pens	He guides pupils to verify	They present, verify and

and validation of hypotheses 7mins	and validate their hypotheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sentences 2 & 3 use possession pronouns but sentence 1 and 4 use relative pronouns. - A relative pronoun is a pronoun that combines two or more sentences to make one complete meaningful sentence. - examples of relative pronouns are who, whose, that, whom, which, etc. 	and validate their hypotheses by asking oral questions	validate hypotheses with the help of the teacher.
Synthesis 12mins	To consolidate new ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is a relative pronoun? - When do we use the following relative pronouns? (who, whom, that) - Make meaningful sentences with: who, whom, that, which. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He asks further questions - explains where necessary Writes certain words on the board and asks pupils to make oral sentences using them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they answer questions orally They listen they make sentences orally
Evaluation 15mins	to check attainment of lesson objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The coat _____ is in the wardrobe is mine. (who, that, what, whose) 2. Atangana is looking for the girl _____ stole his money. (which, whom, whose, who) 3. Those are the pears _____ fell from the tree. (which, who, whom, whose) 4. Did you walk with boys _____ are thieves? (whom, which, what, who) 5. This is my son with _____ I am very pleased. (which, whom, that, who) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -He asks pupils to do exercise 2 on page 32 in their exercise books. - copies out the exercise on the board for pupils who do not have the text book and goes round correcting and later collects books to complete the correction. 	Pupils do the exercise in their exercise books. They later hand the books to the teacher for correction.

Appendix 11b 3-stage Lesson plan

Individual lesson notes on English language for Thursday 16/11/2010

Name of Teacher: _____ **School:** _____ **Class:** 6 **Enrolment:** 89 **Average Age:** 11 years

Topic: Pronouns **Lesson:** Relative Pronouns **Duration:** 45 minutes

Specific Objectives: After presentation of flash cards by the teacher, pupils observe, pronounce, spell and make sentences with words on flashcards, by the end of the lesson, pupils should be able to:

1. Identify a relative pronoun
2. Name the type of pronoun
3. Say what it replaces in a sentence
4. Do exercise 2 on page 32 and make their own sentences using relative pronouns.

Previous Knowledge: Pupils have studied and are familiar with personal pronouns..

Instructional materials: Flash cards with words.

Reference: Tata,P.M. (2009) *Essential English for Exam Success*. Bamenda: Emengu International Ltd.

Stages	Main points of the lesson	Teacher activities	Pupils activities	duration
Introduction	<p>What are parts of speech? Name the different parts of speech and give examples of some: (Nouns/boy, verbs/jump, adjectives/beautiful, pronouns/he etc)</p> <p>In which word class can we find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a word that is the name of something? (Verbs) - a word that shows possession or ownership? (pronouns) - a word that links two or more sentences to make them one? (pronouns) 	<p>He asks oral questions</p> <p>Appreciates pupils' responses and makes corrections where necessary</p>	<p>- Indicate by show of hand and answer questions orally</p> <p>- Repeat corrections after teacher</p>	5 mins

	How do we refer to the kind of pronoun that joins two sentences? (relative pronouns/joining pronouns)			
Presentation	<p>Relative Pronouns Look at the following pairs of sentences and transform each pair into one sentence. What is the new word you used? (a relative pronoun)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The woman came here yesterday. She is my mother. 2. This is the girl. I like her. 3. Look at the shop owner. His shop was burgled. 4. You gave me a shirt. It was very big. <p>What is a relative pronoun? (It is a pronoun that joins two sentences to give it a meaning.) Examples are who, that, which, whom, whose, that etc. e.g. Here is the man <u>whose</u> money was stolen</p> <p>Summary: Relative pronouns join two sentences or parts of sentences to give it one complete meaning.</p>	<p>- He asks oral questions and writes pupils answers on the board. - He asks pupils to come to the board and underline the relative pronouns</p> <p>He asks pupils to summarise what relative pronouns are used for and writes the correct answer on the board.</p>	<p>They answer teacher's questions orally</p> <p>- underline the correct relative pronouns</p> <p>They summarise lesson and give examples of relative pronouns in sentences.</p>	25 mins
Evaluation	<p>Practice exercise (a)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The coat_____ is in the wardrobe is mine. (who, that, what, whose) 2. Atangana is looking for the girl _____ stole his money. (which, whom, whose, who) 3. Those are the pears _____ fell from the tree. (which, who, whom, whose) 	<p>- Teacher asks pupils to do exercise 2 on page 32 in their exercise books. He copies out the exercise on the board for pupils who do not have the text book and goes round correcting and later collects books to complete the</p>	<p>Pupils do the exercise in their exercise books. They later hand the books to the teacher for correction.</p>	15 mins

	<p>4. Did you walk with boys _____ are thieves? (whom, which, what, who)</p> <p>5. This is my son with _____ I am very pleased. (which, whom, that, who)</p> <p>Exercise (b): Homework Make at least 3 sentences with each of the following pronouns in your exercise books. that, whom, whose, who, which, to whom,</p>	<p>correction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goes round checking if pupils need individual help Marks their exercise books - He does correction on the board together with pupils and asks them to make corrections in their books. - Asks pupils to copy down relative pronouns and do the exercise at home 	<p>Correct any incorrect sentences as indicated by teacher and their classmates.</p> <p>Pupils copy the homework</p>	
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