

Thesis Title

An investigation of the perspectives on language proficiency of teachers, learners and supervisors within Workplace English Language and Literacy classes (*AMES, NSW*) and teacher practices relating to spoken and written language development within these classes.

Marie Manidis {B.A., Dip. Ed.,
Grad. Dip. (Multicultural Education)}

Master of Education

1993

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people:

- Dr. Mike Baynham, *Faculty of Adult Education and Languages UTS*, who supervised this thesis, for his critical review, uncompromising standards and constant encouragement to complete the research.
- The four teachers who were the subject of this study and who were willing to allow their practice to be exposed to and investigated by me without public opportunity to defend my comments about their practices. I would like to commend them for the professionalism and dedication in their teaching which they do with great skill and constant reflection.
- All the supervisors and students who agreed to take part in the research and without whose comments this work would not have been possible.
- The four workplaces who gave permission for the research data to be collected.
- Judy Duffy, the principal of the *Workplace English Language and Literacy Program*, who gave permission for the research to take place and assisted me with data collection from the service records
- My family members, who were neglected on many occasions

Table of Contents

Thesis Title	1
Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Illustrations and tables	vi
Abstract	vii

Chapter 1

1	Introduction, topic, aims and research questions	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Topic	1
1.3	Approach	2
1.4	Research Aims	3
1.5	Research Questions	5

Chapter 2

2	Background and context of study	7
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	Industrial Context	7
2.3	Historical development of language assessment	10
2.4	Assessment models in the AMEP	15
2.5	Statement of the issues	25
2.6	Significance of the study	28
2.7	Summary	28

Chapter 3

3	Review of Literature on Assessment Models and Teaching Practices	30
3.1	Introduction	30
3.2	Literature relating to Research Question 1	30
3.3.	Literature relating to research question two	38
3.4.	Literature relating to research question three	40
3.5.	Literature relating to Research question four	43
3.6.	Summary	47

Chapter 4

4	Methodology	48
4.1	Introduction	48
4.2	Method of data collection	49
4.3	The classroom samples of this study	52
4.3.1.	Selection of sample classes	52
4.3.2.	Selection of sample lessons	57
4.3.3.	Selection of supervisors and supervisor meetings	57
4.4	Research procedure	58
4.5	Summary	60

Chapter 5

5	DATA Analysis	61
5.1.	Introduction.....	61
5.2.	Research Question 1	61
5.2.1.a.	Teachers' perspectives	62
5.2.1.b.	Teachers' perspectives and language assessment	69
5.2.2.a.	Supervisors' perspectives	72
5.2.2.b.	Supervisors' comments and language assessment	74
5.2.3.a.	Learners' perspectives	76
5.2.3.b.	Students' perspectives and language proficiency.....	80
5.2.4.	Comparison of perspectives of teachers, supervisors and learners.....	81
5.2.5.	Summary and Conclusions	87
5.3.	Research Question 2	90
5.3.1.	Introduction.....	90
5.3.2.	Classroom 1, Teacher 1, Company SJ	90
5.3.2.a.	Classroom visit No. 1 on 20 November 1991	91
5.3.2.b.	Analysis of teaching and assessment approach	96
5.3.3.	Classroom 2, Teacher 2, Skillmax - Public Sector	101
5.3.3.a.	Description of lesson for classroom visit no 1 on 22.10.91.....	102
5.3.3.b.	Analysis of teaching approach	104
5.3.4.	Classroom 3, Teacher 3, Public Sector Service Blacktown.....	117
5.3.4.a.	Description of lesson for classroom visit no 1 on 9.12.91.....	118
5.3.4.b.	Analysis of teaching approach	119
5.3.5.	Classroom 4, Teacher 4 Skillmax, Public Sector	129
5.3.5.a.	Description of lesson for classroom visit no 1 on 16.9.92.....	130
5.3.5.b.	Analysis of teaching approach	130
5.3.6.	Similarities and differences between teaching practices	136
5.3.7.	Summary and conclusions	139
5.4.	Research Question 3	141
5.4.1.	Introduction.....	141
5.4.2.	Summary and Conclusions	154
5.5.	Research Question 4	155
5.5.1.	Introduction.....	155
5.6.	Summary and conclusions	166

Chapter 6

6.0.	Conclusions.....	168
6.1.	Introduction.....	168

Appendices

Appendix 1	174
Research questionnaire to teachers, learners and supervisors	174
Appendix 2	183
Teacher questionnaire responses	183
Appendix 3	189
Examples of English in the Workplace Competencies	189

Appendix 4	190
Classroom materials from lessons	190
Class 1	191
Class 2	192
Class 3	193
Class 4	194

Bibliography and References

Bibliography & references	195
---------------------------------	-----

List of Illustrations and tables

Table or Diagram	Title of Table or Diagram	Page No.
Table 1	Historical Table of the Development of Language Testing	11
Diagram 1	Course Design Changes in <i>NSW AMES</i>	15
Diagram 2	Assessment Practices of three types in the <i>AMEP</i>	21
Diagram 3.	Proposed model of curriculum sequencing in Learner Pathways	24
Diagram 4.	Personal Theory and Classroom behaviour	40
Diagram 5.	Classroom Routines	41
Diagram 6.	Classroom Context	42
Diagram 7.	The Classroom and its wider context	48
Diagram 8.	Research Data Collection	51
Table 2.	Profiles of All Learners	55
Table 3.	Profiles of learners by class groupings	56
Table 4	Research Data Collection Schedule	59
Table 5.	Percentage sample returns	60
Diagram 9	Hierarchy of knowledge about language	87
Diagram 10	Hierarchy of knowledge about language and individual teacher's approach	139
Diagram 11	Language Assessment in AMES (NSW)	164

Abstract

This research has investigated two related questions: i) the way adult English as a second language teachers, workplace supervisors and English language learners talk about language proficiency in the workplace and what their expectations of language improvement are, and ii) how teachers teach English as a second language in workplace classes, and how their practices are grounded in current or traditional language acquisition theories or language development models and therefore how they foreground some aspects of language more than others.

The 'problem' in the research was to explore the extent to which second language teachers, workplace supervisors and English language learners 'spoke the same language about language'. If there were differences in perceptions about language across the groups and if teachers themselves approached language differently from each other, to what extent might their practices satisfy learners and workplace supervisors in an educational climate of increased accountability?

Four workplace English language and literacy classes were observed, recorded and analysed. The conversational data in the classes was used to illustrate what teachers were saying about language, what language proficiency models their metalanguage derived from and how this related to what they had said they believed about language and language learning. Teachers beliefs about language were surveyed in a separate research questionnaire and their course reports and classroom materials were also used to establish their theoretical underpinnings.

Twenty-four workplace supervisors of the learners concerned were observed and recorded during teacher/supervisor meetings or sent questionnaires to ascertain their views on the learners and what they expected in terms of language performance and improvement from the learners. Thirty one learners from the four classes were interviewed or sent questionnaires about their views of their own language proficiency.

The findings of the research indicated that as a result of certain factors, including professional training, previous language education background and possibly cultural expectations, English as a second language teachers, workplace supervisors and learners did not share the same concepts, understanding and expectations of the language abilities of non-English speaking workers in the workplace.

Comparisons of the four teachers' practices indicated a range of teaching approaches which were all noticeably linked to their organisational and theoretical training and incorporated aspects of several current and traditional pedagogical practices. All four teachers were able to articulate their approaches to language learning and beliefs about what are the significant components of communication which were consistently and obviously reflected in their practice.

The satisfying of stakeholder needs - learners and supervisors - by teacher practices was found not to be an issue because of the complexity of the expectations as well as the group behaviour of adult learners in workplace classes. However a framework for supplementing the theoretical and practical 'biases' by teachers was proposed to close any gaps which may result from idiosyncratic approaches.

Recommendations are made that teachers be assisted to understand their practice through action research, increase their theoretical knowledge in language proficiency and assessment and translate their professional expertise into an intelligible format for workplace stakeholders.