ESL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA

AND HOW THEY IMPACT ON MEDIA USE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

UPENDRAN SUBRAHMANIAN

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ABSTRACT

For several decades now the Government of India has been trying unsuccessfully to integrate media use into language classrooms. This study probed one of the little explored areas in the Indian education context – the beliefs of English language teachers. The two specific questions which guided the research were: 1. What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India? How do the beliefs impact on media use in the language classroom?

The design employed was a qualitative case study using transcripts of email interviews with five participating teachers of English from a single urban, government aided college in south India. The interviews focused on the participants' views of teaching, teachers, language learning, teaching methods, students, and the media. Secondary data sources came from ten classroom observations made of the participants' classroom instruction. Data analysis was continuous; the beliefs of each participant were first identified before making cross case analysis.

Findings indicated that there was a "disconnect" between the participants' stated beliefs and their classroom practices. The dominant beliefs that emerged were determined by institutional factors, and not, as the literature on belief studies seemed to suggest, by "apprenticeship of observation" (beliefs acquired very early in one's life). What teachers did in the classroom was mostly determined by their desire to complete the "prescribed syllabus." In

such a context, where everything was exam driven, media had little or no role to play; even the most experienced teacher found it difficult to incorporate them as part of his/her teaching practices. Recommendations made to the government to make media an integral part of the teaching practices included: 1) making media relevant to the syllabus, 2) involving teachers, students, and administrators in the planning, 3) focusing training new recruits, and 4) introducing media at the elementary school level.

Further research is needed in the area of students' beliefs; their beliefs about English, language learning, and the use of media in the language classroom. Refresher courses conducted by various universities and teacher education institutes need be examined critically. Research studies highlighting the experiences of teachers who have been successful in using the media in India should be conducted. This will provide insights into the factors that promote media use in the language classroom.

INDEX WORDS: ESL, Teachers, Media, Beliefs

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PROLOGUE

As the last note of the song gradually begins to fade, I turn off the cassette player and watch the thirty smiling faces in the classroom put their pens/pencils down before asking my first question.

"What is the word that goes into the first blank?"

Even before I get the chance to call on someone, the answer comes flying from different directions.

"Every day", shout the students enthusiastically.

"Is that one word or two?"

The students look at each other for a second as if surprised by the question. A few seconds pass before they venture a reply. Some say "One" rather confidently, while a few diffidently mumble "Two". A few remain undecided.

"What is the difference between every day and everyday?" I ask.

I identify an individual to answer the question and when he is unable to, I move on to another person. The students make enthusiastic attempts to point out the difference between the two words, and some of the explanations generate a considerable amount of laughter. The discussion of the problem continues till the distinction between the pair is clear. I then move on to the next blank in the lyrics. Within a matter of ten minutes, the lyrics are successfully deciphered.

It is rather unusual for students in India to decipher the words of an English song so quickly. But then the thirty students sitting in the classroom are unusual too. All are teachers of English with varying degrees of experience. Some have been in the business of teaching English

in India for over 25 years, while others have been a part of the profession for less than five. They have come together in Hyderabad for a three-week in-service teacher-preparation program offered by my university, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL). My job during the three weeks is to show them how the media can be used to teach English.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

<u>Statement of the problem</u>

The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, though called an institute, is in fact a deemed university funded by the Central (Federal) Government. For the past twenty years, I have been with the Department of Radio and Television, and during this period I have actively participated in the scripting and production of educational radio and television programs and in the running of the teacher preparation programs offered by the Institute. On most of the in-service teaching preparation programs, I was requested to give three or four demonstration lectures on how to utilize the popular media to teach English. Since the aim was to promote the use of media in the language classroom, I made a conscious decision to use only those which were available in schools/colleges in India or those to which the teachers had easy access. As a result, I limited myself to television, VCRs and tape recorders. For the purpose of this study, the term "media" refers to the tape recorder, the VCR, and television.

In the numerous demonstration lectures that I gave, I attempted to show how movies, pop songs, and educational radio and television programs could be used in the language classroom to teach English. The demonstrations themselves were very popular and this was reflected in the fact that they earned high ratings on the end-of-course evaluation. The considerable amount of interaction that took place during these classes made them lively, and most teachers seemed to enjoy them. Three of the most common comments following the final demonstration lecture were:

"Thank you very much. This was one of the few classes where we didn't have to make an effort to stay awake."

"Would it be possible for you to give us some more demonstrations?"

"Could we have a copy of the songs that you used in class?"

Despite the enthusiasm generated in the classes, when asked if they would consider using audio and video materials to teach English, most teachers were quick to reply with an emphatic, "No". When asked why, the standard response was, "It won't work in my situation." When pressed for a reason as to why they believed that the songs and movies that they had listened to/watched wouldn't work in their teaching context, they merely echoed what they had said earlier: "They won't work in my case, that's all," and "I know they won't work. So there's no point in even trying to use them." Most teachers appeared to have a preconceived notion that the media would be inappropriate in their school context; they were unwilling to consider the possibility of bringing the media into the ESL classroom.

During my twenty years at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages as a teacher trainer, I have succeeded in "converting" only a handful of teachers into incorporating the media into their teaching practices. Although many participants voluntarily copied the songs that were used in the demonstration lectures, most did so because they were "familiar" with them and "liked them." They did not entertain any ideas of sharing them with their students. Their reluctance to use the songs seemed to suggest that they did not consider the media to be an integral part of the classroom.

Yet, in every in-service program run by the Institute, my department is expected to participate; showing teachers how to use the media is seen as an integral part of the program. The Government of India too has been promoting the use of media in both schools and colleges for

over 50 years. Currently, it is investing millions of dollars producing educational television programs for teachers every year for their use in undergraduate classrooms across the country. During the 18 years that these programs have been on air, I have not come across one teacher who has viewed them along with his students. A large, but a relatively poor developing nation like India, cannot afford to invest millions of dollars on a project which is incapable of delivering its promises.

Since becoming a teacher educator, I have been attempting to employ the seductive quality of the media to induce teachers into changing some of their existing teaching practices. I have been operating under the impression that if I demonstrate how a tape recorder or television can be used effectively in the language classroom, then practicing teachers would willingly incorporate them into theirs. I strongly believed that when the teachers experienced for themselves how much more fun and interactive learning through the media could be, they would of their own accord make the media an integral part of their teaching practice.

I now realize that for nearly twenty years I have been ardently promoting the media because they played a significant role in my learning the English language. During my formative years, I watched a lot of English movies and was constantly glued to the radio, listening to the songs of the Beatles and a host of programs broadcast by the BBC and All India Radio. I picked up a lot of English by doing this, and perhaps what is more important, I had fun learning the language in this manner. It is not surprising, therefore, that when I became a teacher trainer I wished to promote, though unconsciously, the methods that I had used to learn English. I believed that fellow teachers should learn from my experience, and without my being aware of it, I tried to impose my beliefs on them. But, no matter how passionately I tried to demonstrate the wonderful teaching potential of the media, the teachers seldom reciprocated with the same

enthusiasm. Their attitude towards the media was very blasé to say the least and this often left me feeling very frustrated.

What I failed to realize was that just as I had strong beliefs about how English could be taught effectively in the classroom using the media, the teachers whose teaching practices I was attempting to influence had their own strong beliefs. Further, these beliefs may have been similar to or radically different from mine. Without determining what their beliefs about teaching were, I was attempting to bring about changes. It was not surprising therefore that very few teachers actually incorporated the changes being recommended. Like most "experts" involved in in-service programs, I was not making an argument for why teachers should change their beliefs, I was merely thrusting my beliefs on them. I wanted the teachers to adopt my practices in their classrooms. Research work in the area of teacher beliefs suggests that before bringing about changes in individual teaching practices, one must attempt to find out from the participants what their beliefs are. Failure to do so will merely result in the beliefs in existing practices being strengthened (Grossman, 1990; Johnson, 2000).

On the one hand, little attention has been paid to how teachers understand/construct the teaching process and how their beliefs impact their teaching. On the other hand, many governments in the developing world, including in India, have embraced the media as a means to "leapfrog" into the next century, and catch up with the West. In this enthusiasm, decision makers have thrust media into the education system. They have done so without determining how one major group of actors in the education system—teachers—look at educational, and other media, and what their attitudes toward using them in the classroom are. The present study attempts to understand what ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India are, and how they impact media use the language classroom. Such an understanding can inform teacher preparation

programs, educational media policy and planning, and perhaps give such programs a better chance of succeeding in the classroom. This study brings together two perspectives: one, the growing body of work in the area of teacher beliefs, and two, studies that look at the success and failure of media in education.

<u>Teacher Beliefs</u>

In the past 25 years, a growing body of research has attempted to understand the beliefs of teachers and the philosophy which underlies teaching practices. Work done in this area by researchers like Clark and Petersen (1986), Grossman (1990), and Johnson (2000) suggested that what teachers do in the classroom is very often dictated by their beliefs. Researchers have argued that these beliefs, which are implicit and seldom openly stated, are acquired very early in life, sometimes as early as when the individual is five years old. According to some, an individual's beliefs about teaching are often formed when he/she is still in school. Lortie (1975) called this "apprenticeship of observation." He argued that the hundreds of hours spent in school as a student helped an individual form certain beliefs about what teaching is, and these beliefs determined the approach the teacher would adopt in his/her classroom. Beliefs about good and bad teaching practices, once formed, are resistant to change, and the earlier they are formed the more recalcitrant they prove to be. Johnson (2000) and Grossman (1990), two individuals who have done a considerable amount of work in this area of research, argued that teacher preparation programs often have little or no impact on the beliefs of teacher trainees. The theoretical knowledge provided in in-service and pre-service programs is often thrown out the window when teachers enter the real classroom. Novice teachers, it has been found, tend to adopt the

methods of teachers to whom they were partial as students. Clearly, teachers very often teach as they were taught (Bailey, 1996; Cuban, 2001; Kennedy, 1990).

Most teacher preparation programs do not address the issue of beliefs (Johnson, 1994). The educators assume that novice teachers who enroll in the program come with a clean slate, and it is the trainer's job to provide the students with the theoretical knowledge which will enable them to perform in the language classroom. As noted, such programs are doomed to fail. It has been found that it is only when teacher preparation programs have taken into account the beliefs of learners and these beliefs figure prominently in the theoretical input given by the professors that some amount of change in the belief system of individuals has been achieved (McDiarmid, 1990; Tillema, 1994).

While research on teacher beliefs has been gaining ground in developed countries like the United States (this is explored further in the following chapter), little or no interest has been shown in this field in third world countries like India. Premier institutions like the Central Institute of English have been running the same type of pre- and in-service program every year; there has been no attempt to modify the content of the courses so that participants can adapt them to the context in which they are teaching. All teachers of English are viewed as being the same. The programs tend to be prescriptive; as experts we instruct teachers how to teach without understanding the context in which they teach and how they view teaching. It is time that policy makers and educational planners in India take into consideration these important factors.

To place the study in context, it is imperative to understand the role that English has played and continues to play in India. The next few sections will provide a historical perspective, situate English in the present Indian context, and discuss the role it plays in the educational arena. In order to appreciate the nature of the present study, it is imperative to understand the

love-hate relationship that India has had with the English language. The following sections will provide a brief sketch of (1) the history of the English language in India – pre and post independence, (2) English language teaching in India, and (3) media use and education.

<u>English in India</u>

India likes Gods. And Englishmen like posing as Gods. The English language was

part of the pose and power. Indians accepted it, too. (Kachru, 1986, p. 5)

<u>Pre-independence (1830-1947)</u>

Since time immemorial India has been a highly stratified society, one in which there is a rigid hierarchy among the classes and extreme inequity. In the pre-colonial era, education was the prerogative of the Brahmins and the wealthier members of the upper caste. It was categorically denied to the lower castes and also to all women, irrespective of the class to which they belonged. The British, when they first arrived in India in the early 16th century, did not involve themselves in the educational system. They established the East India Company and had offices in Chennai (Madras), Kolkutta (Calcutta), and Bombay (Mumbai). The Company was mostly interested in trade, and by the end of the 18th century, it had succeeded in driving away most of its European rivals and established a stranglehold on India. In 1813, the East India Company was dissolved and the British Government took over the administration; India became the jewel in her Majesty's Government's crown. The newly appointed administrators soon realized they needed the "natives" to help them with the administrative work, and that it was much more cost effective to hire Indians than have Englishmen shipped from Britain. Lord Macaulay (1831), the man who was instrumental in introducing English into India, argued:

> The Empire is itself the strangest of all political anomalies ... that we should govern a territory ten thousand miles from us, a territory larger and more populous than France, Spain, Italy and Germany put together...a territory inhabited by men differing from us in race, colour, language, manners, morals, religion; these are prodigies to which the world has seen nothing similar. (cited in Bailey, 1991, p. 137)

In his Minute written in 1831, Macaulay recommended creating a class of individuals who could serve as "….interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (cited in Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998, p. 14). He did not encourage the promotion of the Indian languages.

> It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. (cited in Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998, p. 14-15)

Macaulay recommended that that the printing of all Arabic and Sanskrit books be stopped immediately, and that the prestigious Sanskrit college in Calcutta be closed down.

In 1832, Lord Macaulay's proposal for the establishment of English medium schools was accepted by Lord Bentinck, the Governor General of India. These schools were set up only to meet the growing administrative needs of the British. "The English provided a basic education sufficient both in size and quality to produce the relatively small number of clerks and craftsmen required for government service and the industrial and the commercial sectors" (Ghosh & Zachariah, 1987, p.10). The first schools were modeled on the British system. Textbooks which

were being used in England were transplanted in India. They were literary, and soon they became:

> ….the very staple of English teaching, representing both models of good writing and illustrations of the grammatical rules of the language. Shakespeare and Nesfield became the two pillars of English education in India and even their modified versions became a part of the life of the conquered race. English and the teaching of English stayed on in India and created a class of Indians with a strong grounding in English. (Krishnaswami & Sriraman, 1994, p. 56)

Due to the emphasis on grammar and the classics, the students learned a peculiar kind of English. Charles Trevelyan, brother-in-law of Macauley, writing in the 1850s, remarked that the educated Indians spoke "purer English than we speak ourselves, for they take it from the purest models, they speak the language of The Spectator, such English as is never spoken in England" (cited in Krishnaswami & Sriraman, 1994, p. 47). The trend continues today; the late English poet Stephen Spender, when visiting India in the late 1980s, commented that Indians spoke a variety of English that was prevalent in England 150 years ago.

Despite the quaint English, the natives who graduated from schools run by the colonials immediately found jobs as clerks in the colonial government. Education in these schools became a passport for entry into government and mercantile services; the demand for them increased, and the Christian missions met it. In their zest to convert the heathens by showing them the "road to the light," the missionaries started many schools. During the initial stages, only the humanities were introduced; the syllabus and materials were borrowed directly from Britain and transplanted onto the Indian continent. Science subjects weren't introduced until the early decades of the twentieth century. The church, which was once again instrumental in making the subjects

available at both the school and college levels, did so with an ulterior motive. It wanted to demonstrate to the "natives" how superstitious the indigenous religions were.

It was not the intent of the church or the colonial government to educate all Indians; they merely wished to cater to the wealthy and the more influential sections of society, thus creating strong and powerful elite. In the process, the Church succeeded in to creating a lingua franca for the elite, a common language that could be spoken and understood by the intellectuals across the country. In a nation divided politically and linguistically, the church unknowingly provided the glue which would bind Indians together during their struggle for independence – the English language. The language of the master became the language of freedom. Realizing the importance of English, the British soon expanded the domains in which English was used. By the early 1920s, English became the sole language of administration and the language of the court. People who wished to specialize in law and medicine had to go to England to study. And, many Indians who were to play an active role in India's struggle for independence did exactly this. They went to England, learned the English language and English law and used them to defeat the English. English became the medium through which the political beliefs of the various leaders were espoused; the feeling of national resurgence and political awakening was voiced in this foreign language.

Post independence (1947- present)

When India attained its independence in 1947, at least 16 languages were being spoken in the country and the literacy rate was an abysmal 14 percent. In order to avoid a serious language controversy, the first government designated English the Associate Official Language. Hindi, the language that is spoken in four northern states in India, was made the National Language. Article

343 (2) of the Indian Constitution specifically stated that the Associate National Language, English, was to be employed for official purposes, both intra- and internationally, until 26 January, 1965; after that, Hindi was to replace it and become the sole Official Language. In a speech delivered on 7 August 1959, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru declared:

> ….for an indefinite period – I do not know how long- I would have English as an associate, additional language which can be used, not because of facilities and all that, but because I do not wish the people of non-Hindi areas to feel that certain doors of advance are closed to them….So, I would have it as an alternative language as long as people require it. (cited in Krishnaswami & Sriraman, 1994, p. 58)

But when a strong anti-Hindi sentiment manifested itself in the form of riots in different parts of the country in 1963, Parliament passed the Official Language Act to placate the non-Hindi states. The Act specified that:

> Notwithstanding the expiration of the period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution, the English language may, as from the appointed day, continue to be used, in addition to Hindi, for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before that day, and for the transaction of business in Parliament. (cited in Krishnaswami & Sriraman, 1994, p. 72)

As a result, English continues to be the Associate National Language even today. In that capacity it plays the role of a link language for both national and international purposes. Three states in the North-East - Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram- have made English the sole official State language.

Although concerted efforts have been made by politicians to have English replaced, the average Indian continues to be enamored of it. Even those politicians who declare publicly that English must be thrown out, send their children and grandchildren to English medium schools.

> English has continued to be an important part of the communication matrix of urban India. There has been a glaring proliferation of English seeping through the upper crust of the society to the middle class and further down to the grassroots level, particularly in urban settings. It is estimated that over four percent of the total population knows some kind of English, spread across the country. (Khubchandani, 1994, p. 77)

Given that India's population is over one billion at present, this statement implies there are nearly 40 million people who can speak some variety of English in the country. And this:

> ….is a virtual three-fold increase from the number of English speakers when the British rule ended in 1947. Today there are more English teachers, more English students and more Indian English writers, a stronger English press and a powerful English media than when the British left the country. (Khubchandani, 1994, p. 77)

David Crystal (1995) pointed out that in terms of numbers of English speakers, India ranks third in the world, after the USA and UK. It is not surprising therefore that there is considerable demand in the country for English Medium schools.

Schools in India

Since achieving independence in 1947, India has provided free education to all children aged 6 to 14. The literacy rate has increased from 14% to 65% throughout the country. Schools that provide free education are run by the State Governments where the medium of instruction is

the local state language. These schools are shunned by the middle and upper middle classes that want their children to be well versed in English. The children coming from these sections of the community generally attend private schools. The Government schools cater to the socially disadvantaged; English is invariably reduced to a second or third language; students are mostly exposed to it from the fifth or sixth grade onwards. But the importance of English is being realized in such schools as well. States like West Bengal and Bihar that had abolished English from their curriculum have reintroduced it thanks to the political pressure applied by the students who go to these schools. The students and their parents argued, that by denying them English, the State was depriving them of an opportunity to get a decent job outside its own borders.

Types of Schools in India

There are three different types of schools in India.

1. Government Schools: education is free, but the medium of instruction is the state language. English may be introduced in either Grade five or Grade six depending on whether it is being taught as the second or third language. If taught as the third language, students will be exposed to it for only three years (Grades six to eight). As a second language, students will learn it for five years (Grades six to ten). Most non-Hindi-speaking states teach English as the second language, and Hindi is reduced to a third language. Parents who send their children to these schools usually come from the lower socio-economic strata.

2. Central Government Schools: education is not free; students pay a nominal fee. The medium of instruction is both English and Hindi; science subjects are taught in English and the Arts through Hindi. Sanskrit, and not the local language, is the third language that

all students must learn. The parents of children going to these schools are either in the Armed Forces or employed by the Central (Federal) Government; and they frequently transferred from one state to another.

3. Private Schools: education is not free; students pay fees ranging from reasonable to exorbitant. The medium of instruction is English from the beginning. Hindi or the local language is offered as the second language; foreign languages like French, German and Spanish are sometimes offered as third languages. Parents of children who go to these schools are generally from middle to upper income groups. In order to get admitted to these schools, students are often compelled to take an entrance exam administered by the school and only those who do exceedingly well are allowed to enroll. Parents often hire teachers to coach their children so that they might do well in these entrance examinations.

Despite the high fees charged by the private schools, parents scramble to get their children admitted. They feel that English is the "only sure key to good jobs and careers in the country today. There simply are no lucrative jobs and careers open to those with no English or inadequate English, no matter how highly they are otherwise educated" (Nadkarni, 1994, p.131). Private schools play an important role in the educational system and because of the persistent demand for them, they have been proliferating at a phenomenal rate.

> One of the most striking phenomena of contemporary school education in India is
> the rapid growth of what is variously known as Public Schools, Progressive
> Schools or Independent Schools with English as the medium of instruction. The
> country has by now over 2500 such full-fledged schools sending children for
> secondary or senior secondary examinations. Every year about 100 such schools
> are being added. (Singha, 1991, p. 26)

Media and Education

The proliferation of English medium schools, however, has brought about little significant change in the teaching methodology. Prior to 1947, English was taught by native speakers; after independence, this task fell on Indians. In 1958, the Government, concerned about the falling standards of English in the country, set up the Central Institute of English in Hyderabad. The mission statement of the Institute reads as follows:

> Whereas, considering the falling standards of English in India, especially at the secondary stage of education, it is deemed necessary to take steps to improve the teaching of English, both through organization of research in the teaching of this subject and the preparation of teachers in the most suitable techniques.

Since 1958, most states in India have set up English Language Teaching Centers or Regional Institutes of English of their own, in collaboration with the Central Institute of English, to improve the standards of teaching English. The establishment of such centers has brought about some changes in the content of course materials. There is less focus on literature and more on language. The plays of Shakespeare and the poems of Donne have been replaced by Indian authors writing in English.

The training centers have also attempted to promote the use of media in the language classroom. The Central Institute of English, which was renamed Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in 1973, has been broadcasting educational radio programs for children in the age group of 10 to 14 for nearly 40 years. The English Language Teaching Centers in the different states have either made use of these programs or have produced programs of their own in an attempt to make language learning fun for the students.

The Central (Federal) Government, too, has been playing an active role in the promotion of media use in the classroom. When television was first introduced to India in 1959 it was conceived as a mass medium and a mass educator for the county's large population scattered in remote and culturally diverse areas. The first set of programs produced by All India Radio in collaboration with UNESCO was aimed at imparting social education through the medium of television. Later, in 1961 the Delhi Schools Administration in collaboration with the Ford Foundation launched the school television project; 360 television sets were installed in 150 schools to cater to the needs of the students in the secondary level. In fact, all the television programs produced and broadcast during the early years of television were educational in nature. In 1972, the Government established the Educational Media Project, which encouraged the use of radio, television, and film in the classroom for the purpose of improving the quality of instruction at the primary school level. The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) made use of enrichment programs to reach people in remote corners of the country. In 1984, the University Grants Commission created six Educational Media Research Centres (EMRC) in universities in different parts of the country. The primary task of these centers was to produce educational television programs which would meet the needs of undergraduate students. The credo laid down was:

> UGC Country Wide Classroom broadcasts are produced to upgrade, update and enrich the quality of higher education, while extending its reach. It caters primarily to undergraduate students and teachers of colleges in small towns and rural areas and secondarily their counterparts in the cities.

In India, there is a considerable gulf in the quality of education in cities and villages, and the government sees television as the medium which can help bridge the educational gap. Unlike going to college, viewing Country Wide Classroom programs does not lead to a degree.

Initially, the programs produced by the EMRCs were broadcast for one hour between one and two in the afternoon, six days a week on the national network, Doordarshan. The Government expected the teachers to take their students to the common room and view the program along with them. In the mid 1990s, the number of the Educational Media Research Centres around the country increased to 17 and the Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) based in New Delhi was set up to coordinate the activities of the numerous centers. The hours of broadcast increased from one to two per day and to ensure that students got the benefit of the programs broadcast, the Indian Government distributed over 250, 000 cassette players and 40, 000 color televisions to colleges in different parts of the country. The programs continue today and are broadcast in English as well as in Hindi.

In 2002, India had as many as 259 "recognized" universities- i.e., universities which had the sanction of the University Grants Commission (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Publications Division, 2002). With every state starting an Open University of its own, the number of universities is increasing. Dr. Swaminadhan, one of the members of the Planning Commission said, "In view of its cost effectiveness and equity value, Distance Education will be the main channel of Higher Education" (cited in Sweeney, Kallur, Maryak, Oliver & Stegman, 1998, p. 18). Following in the footsteps of Britain, the Central Government established a National Open University in New Delhi - the Indira Gandhi National Open University. It is one of the largest distance education networks in the Third World and offers over 30 programs. In addition to the print materials it sends to participants, the university also broadcasts educational

radio and television programs six days a week. It has established a network of 17 regional centers (at State levels) and 265 study centers across the country. By the turn of the century, the university is planning to open study centers in all districts.

<div align="center">Teaching in Schools and Colleges</div>

Despite the promotion of media by the ELT centers and the Government, teaching practices in schools and colleges have not undergone any radical changes. Teachers continue to be transmitters of knowledge; they tend to approach their students from a high pedestal (Singha, 1991). In most classrooms they remain "dictators"; their primary job is not to teach, but to dictate notes. This is a far cry from what Soloman (1992) perceived the teaching practices of a technology-enriched classroom should entail. "Technology enriched classrooms can change the current models of teaching and learning by shifting the role of the teacher from a deliverer of information or knowledge to one of facilitator of learning" (p. 42). The main aim of most teachers in India is to complete the syllabus and provide answers to questions, which successful students can reproduce in exams. Students, for the most part, passively absorb what is directed at them and regurgitate it in the exam. Thus, memory plays a crucial role in the Indian educational system. There is no critical thinking, original writing, or an attempt to go outside the prescribed text on the part of the teachers or learners.

Although the Government obliquely has been using and promoting the use of television for educational purposes since 1955, it was only in the 1986 document that it stated its intentions explicitly. Unfortunately, however, prior to making its declaration, it did not consult with the teachers to determine their views of the media, nor did it look into the changes that would have to be made in the existing system to make the inclusion of the media possible. Emihovich and

Wager (1992) argued that planners and educators must examine media use in the classroom from a holistic cultural perspective. If they don't, failure is a foregone conclusion:

> ….the introduction of any new technology should be considered in relation to its effect on the school culture as a whole, including ways students and teachers perceive the new technology, how administrators view it in relation to the organizational climate of the school. (p 435-36)

The planners in India took none of these factors into consideration. The lack of coordination between the educational planners and the teachers has been the bane of educational planning in India; and perhaps all over the world. The Government often makes decisions unilaterally, and teachers are reduced to teaching in situations where they have no say in educational planning, syllabus design, materials production or examination reforms. When given the opportunity to reform the outdated system, teachers generally balk.

> While teachers of the conventional textbooks say that teaching has become a frustrating experience, they have done precious little to change the system because the existing power structure in the class and the 'colonialism in the classroom' suits them; where there are attempts to change in the power structure, there has been stiff resistance from the teachers themselves. (Krishnaswami & Sriraman, 1994, p.32)

Reddi (1994) argued that Indian planners should be congratulated on attempting to exploit the latest technologies to meet the requirements of education. While the decision to introduce the new media into the classroom is laudable, the hurried manner in which it was executed leaves much to be desired. The government could have achieved better results if they

had carried out the implementation in a phased manner in consultation with those who would be instrumental in bringing about these changes – teachers.

While the Government has invested enormous sums of money in setting up the EMRCs and the production of the ETV programs, it has made no attempt to revamp the teacher preparation courses. For the most part, such courses remain largely neglected. Teachers are not given hands-on training in the use of media in the classroom (Krishnaswami & Sriraman, 1994). Denied such training, it becomes impossible for teachers to incorporate the media in their everyday teaching practices.

Also, there has been no commissioned study by the UGC to determine if and how the educational programs are being used in schools and colleges. Are they being used at all? If they are, how successful are they? If they are not being used, why aren't they? This does not imply that this area of research has been totally neglected. Independent researchers have done considerable work on media use in the Indian classrooms and have found that they promote learning. Research has been done on the use of audio programs (Balagopal, 1980; Faizur Rahman, 1982; Giri, 1990, Sudame, 1988), video programs (Idayavani, 1991; Kalimuthu, 1991; Nayak, 1984; Sood, 1993; Swamy, 1989), and television (Ghosh, 1992; Jaiswal, 1992; Kapadia, 1992, Mohanty, 1988). Dewal (1997) pointed out that one of the major problems with the research work done in the Indian context has been that the studies have favored one method. Most adopted quantitative comparative methods; the studies compared what and how much students learned when taught using the traditional method vis-à-vis the media. "The uncharted field of illuminative in-depth phenomenological research studies lies unexplored and needs to be explored" (Dewal, 1997, p.433). The present study attempts to overcome this deficiency.

The Present Study

We have been here for three weeks, and for every class, we had different people coming and lecturing us. They lectured and we listened, and in many of the classes we tried hard not to fall asleep. When you used songs and films, it kept us awake. We really enjoyed ourselves. The class was very interactive and whenever you asked questions many of us were shouting out the answers at the same time. Because we were having fun, the class was very noisy. It didn't seem to bother you as a teacher. But it would bother me. And I am afraid that this is what would happen if I did use the media in the language classroom. I wouldn't know how to handle it.

This was the response of an in-service teacher when I asked if she would be using the songs she had requested to be copied in her own classroom. The teacher admitted that she "enjoyed" the highly "interactive" nature of the class, yet she found the "noise" that the interaction generated rather disturbing. Is a noisy classroom necessarily a bad classroom? If it is, then what is a good classroom according to this teacher? Where do her beliefs about what a good or bad classroom come from? These were just some of the questions that crossed my mind on that day; these are some of the questions which I address in my study.

Research work in the area of teachers' beliefs suggested that much of what teachers do in the classroom is determined by their beliefs (Bailey, 1996; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Wood, 1995). In his seminal article, Pajares (1992) argued that the investigation of teachers' beliefs "should be a focus of educational research and can inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot" (p.307). While developed nations have begun to comprehend the importance of determining the teachers' underlying beliefs, developing

nations like India have not. Though there are studies done on what teachers do in the language classroom (Amali Raj, 1995; Karuna Kumar, 1985; Sunil Kumar, 1989), there are few which attempt to understand why teachers do what they do.

This study is an attempt to understand the implicit beliefs of teachers in India; more specifically, it attempts to make sense of the complex world of the ESL teacher in the Indian context. The basic instructional culture in India has been little examined and consequently little is known about instructional beliefs and thoughts of practicing teachers. Providing teachers an opportunity to talk about their experiences, this study seeks to understand some of the underlying beliefs or theories of ESL teachers in India. The two main research questions are:

1. What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India?

2. How do these beliefs impact on media use in the language classroom?

The questions admittedly are broad, but appropriate; the goal of the study is to identify a wide range of beliefs held by teachers of English. The practical and professional knowledge that the teachers in India draw upon and the contextual factors that determine what they do in the language classroom will be examined.

The second question attempts to determine how the beliefs of teachers impact on media use in the language classroom. Research findings (Akbaba & Kurubacak, 1998) have suggested teachers' attitudes towards technology as an educational instrument must be ascertained before prescribing one as the relevant technology for a particular context and attempting to integrate it into the curriculum. The Indian Government has been doing the exact opposite. It has been investing huge sums of money trying to promote media use in the classroom without determining the beliefs of teachers. Most of these attempts have resulted in failure. Since there is congruence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices, there is an urgent need in the present Indian

context to understand what a teacher's perception of teaching is and how the media fit into this perception. There is a need to understand from the teachers' perspective why the media have not made inroads into the language classroom; why they have failed to revolutionize education in the Indian context. Brousseau, Book and Byers (1988) argued that one of the ways of bringing about changes in the teaching style of individuals is by understanding that person's beliefs. There is every possibility that the findings of studies done in developed countries may have no relevance in the present Indian context.

The manner in which the study was carried out is explained in detail in Chapter three, but for the sake of convenience a brief summary is presented here. The study was conducted in a government-aided college in south India. Having worked as a teacher trainer for 20 years, I had easy access to English language teachers in many colleges. Since context plays an important role in determining and reinforcing one's beliefs, for this study I limited myself to studying the beliefs of teachers from one college. My first priority was to identify a college that had a relatively large English department. The college also needed to be one that was equipped with the various media that teachers could use in the language classroom. I visited various colleges that had between 10 and 15 teachers in the department and explained to them the nature of the study. None of them was willing to take part in the study. After much searching, I finally found a college which had eight teachers in the Department of English, out of which five were willing to take part in the study. This became the site for my study.

The methodology used is qualitative; a case study approach is used to determine ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India. The data for this case study was collected in the following manner. After having acquired the teachers' consent, I first conducted some classroom observations. I observed each of the five participant teaching two classes. The observations, in

conjunction with the field notes generated helped in honing the interview questions that followed. The second stage of data collection consisted of interviewing the teachers through email. A detailed description of how email differs from face to face interviews and the methods employed to analyze the data are described in detail in Chapter three.

This study provides insight into why ESL teachers in India adopt the practices that they do and also throws light on their attitude towards the media in the language classroom. We know little about what teachers really believe - especially those from the developing world. If education in these countries is to change at all, we must begin by paying attention to the voice of the practicing teacher.

Significance of the Study

The study provides a significant contribution to the research on teacher beliefs. Although it explored two areas which earlier belief studies have done, namely teacher beliefs and technology, the present study explored it in a context into which few researchers have ventured– India. The study is valuable in that it will provide information in an area where little or no information exists. The results will contribute to the ongoing discussion on teacher preparation and in-service teacher programs, and also to government policy towards promoting media in the classroom.

Another significant aspect of the study is that unlike most research work done on teacher beliefs this one makes use of email for collecting data. While the earlier work relied on the face-to-face interview, this study attempts to show how the available technology can be use of innovatively in qualitative research.

Definition of terms

Teachers: For the purposes of this study, the focus was primarily on teachers of English at the undergraduate level in a government-aided college located in southern India.

ESL: The term has been used to mean English as a second language. English, being the Associate Official language of India, is a second language and not a foreign language in India.

Media: For the purpose of this study the term "media" refers to the tape recorder, television, and the VCR. These comprise the equipment available in colleges in India, or those that the teachers can readily obtain.

Beliefs: This term has been subject to several different interpretations by scholars. For the purpose of this study, beliefs refer to the implicit theory each practicing teacher evolves over the years which determines what he/she does in the language classroom.

Summary

This chapter presented a statement of the problem that led to a need for this research. It also informed the reader about the two research questions the study will answer:

1. What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India?

2. How do these beliefs impact on media use in the language classroom?

In order to understand the context of the study this chapter provided the history of the English language in India, and a brief review of the Indian Government's attempts to promote the use of media in the language classroom. Autobiographical information was also provided to help the reader understand the researcher's interest in the questions. The chapter also reviewed some of the recent work done in the area of teacher beliefs and presented arguments as to why

the present study is very different from all those which have gone before it. Finally, the chapter

presented a brief overview of the study proposed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Introduction</u>

In this chapter I review the literature on teacher beliefs, which provides the theoretical framework for my study. Since my interest lies in determining what ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India are and how these beliefs impact on media use, the study is also informed by the research done on media use in the classroom. The chapter itself is divided into five sections. The first two sections provide a historical overview of belief studies, including why researchers felt compelled to conduct such studies and how they differed from the earlier work done in the area of language learning and acquisition. The third section briefly reviews scholars' definitions of the term "beliefs" and the important role beliefs play in determining the teaching practices of an individual. The focus of the fourth section is on how an individual acquires his/her beliefs, and the final section reviews some of the research work done in the area of belief studies.

The studies and articles reviewed in this chapter were discovered using different methods. Some were recommended by my doctoral committee members and by my colleagues in India. The references found in the materials suggested by this group of individuals provided further sources related to teacher beliefs and media use in the language classroom. Search for materials was conducted in two libraries, the Ramesh Mohan Library at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, and the UGA library in Athens, Georgia. On-line databases and indexes like the UGA Library Catalog, ERIC, ERIC Thesaurus (descriptors),

Galileo, and Dissertation Abstracts were some of the sources that were frequently used to broaden the search for materials related to the study. Some of the key terms used for the search included educational technology and teacher attitudes, instructional technology and teacher education, innovations in education; computers and educational change; and teacher participation and educational technology in use. In addition to this, internet search engines like Ask Jeeves, Yahoo, Google, and Alta Vista were used to find relevant material.

Process-Product Approach

Research in the area of second language learning and acquisition over the past fifty years has focused mostly on the language learner or on the methodology used in the language classroom (Wittrock, 1986). Teachers, who play an integral part in the teaching-learning process, have for the most part remained a peripheral component. The past twenty years, however, have seen a small, but growing body of research examining the relationship between teacher beliefs and teaching practices (Fang, 1996; Johnson, 2000; Tillema, 1994). This line of research is fundamentally different from the earlier traditional research on teaching, which merely attempted to determine how teacher behavior influenced student achievement. Called different names by different people – teaching effectiveness, process-product studies, teaching behavior (Brophy & Good, 1986; Shulman, 1986) - the aim of the earlier researchers was to find a relationship between a teacher's behavior in the classroom, students' behavior, and student achievement. The underlying assumption of the research as described by Anderson, Everston and Brophy (1979) was "to define relationships between what teachers do in the classroom (the process of teaching) and what happens to their students (the products of learning)" (p. 193). The primary aim of such research was to determine the criteria for excellence in teaching by estimating the effects of

teachers' actions on student learning (Beattie, 1995). This kind of research merely focused on observable teachers' actions and attempted to determine what effects they had on student achievement. There was no effort made to get inside a teacher's head to understand why he did what he did. Research work done in this domain was easily subjected to empirical research methods. A wide range of criticism was leveled against this approach; some significant issues are listed below:

1. Studies were invariably carried out in contrived laboratory conditions. (Shulman, 1986)

2. Researchers assumed that causality was unidirectional – i.e., teacher's classroom behavior affected students' classroom behavior, ultimately affecting their achievement. The premise was that students' behavior did not alter the teacher's behavior in any way (Doyle, 1977; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

3. The relationship between the teachers' actions and their observable effects was also thought to be linear and unidirectional, not reciprocal. (McDonald & Elias, 1976).

4. Contextual factors were assumed to play no role in the teaching-learning process. The studies which were carried out employing this paradigm failed to explore a possibility of a relationship between contextual factors and teacher behavior. (Brophy & Good, 1986; Freeman & Richards, 1996).

One of the first researchers who made a case for belief studies was Shulman (1986). He suggested that researchers should begin to investigate the teacher and explore the area of teacher thinking. He argued that it was essential to do this because for the most part in the earlier research, the teacher had gone unnoticed. Shulman argued that the teacher was "a professional who has more in common with physicians, lawyers, and architects than with technicians who

execute skilled performances according to prescriptions" (cited in Clark & Petersen, 1986, p. 256).

<div align="center">Belief Studies: Shift from the observable to the unobservable</div>

In the past twenty-five years, the focus of interest of some researchers (Fang, 1996; Grossman, 1990; Johnson, 1996) has been gradually shifting from the observable to the unobservable. This shift in focus was the result of the dissatisfaction that researchers felt toward the behaviorist approaches to the study of teaching in the 1970s.

> Ideologically, viewing teachers as active agents in the development of their own practice, as decision-makers using their specialist knowledge to guide their actions in particular situations, underlined the autonomous, responsible aspects of teachers' work, and provided an appealing rationale for considering teaching as a worthy, complex, demanding profession, especially when contrasted with the previously dominant view of teaching as the mastering of a series of effective teaching behavior. (Calderhead, 1987, p.5)

Researchers began to look at what went on inside the teachers' heads; they began investigating the teachers' thinking, beliefs, planning and decision-making process.

According to Clark and Peterson (1986) the process of teaching involved two major domains: teachers' thought processes (i.e., teacher cognition) and teachers' actions and their observable effects. While the process-product approach focused on what was observable, the new body of research attempted to provide insights into why teachers behave in the manner they do in the classrooms. The basic premise is that it is the teachers' thoughts and beliefs which

guide their classroom behavior (Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Stern, 1983); and these beliefs are the teacher's own brainchild and not someone else's'.

This line of research attempted to shed some light on why teachers do what they do in the classroom and why the process of teaching looks and works as it does (Clark & Peterson, 1986). The underlying assumptions are two-fold: teachers are professionals who make judgments and decisions about what they should or should not do in the classroom, and these judgments and other thought processes guide their classroom behavior (Shavelson & Stern, 1983).

The relationship between teacher behavior, student behavior and student achievement is conceptualized as being reciprocal, rather than unidirectional, circular rather than linear. Thus, it allowed for the possibility "that teacher behavior affects student behavior, which in turn affects teacher behavior and ultimately student achievement" (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 257). This line of research is based on the assumption "that what teachers do in the classroom is a reflection of what they know and believe and that teacher knowledge and 'teacher thinking' provide the underlying framework or schema which guides the teacher's classroom actions" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p 29). These beliefs about teaching are usually the outcome of one's experiences. As Cummings (1989) stated,

> The kinds of practical knowledge which teachers use in teaching appear to exist largely in very personalized terms, based on unique experiences, individual conceptions, and their interactions with local contexts. It tends to have a personal significance which differs from prescribed models of educational theory. (p. 46-47)

Studies done in the area of reading by Nist and Mealey (1991) and Richards, Gipe and Thompson (1987), for example, demonstrated that a teacher's approach to reading, to a

considerable extent is determined by what he/she perceives reading to be. Instructors who viewed reading as an activity that involved decoding and interpreting text gave importance to phonic rules and silent reading. Scholars argued that this stream of research should be pursued vigorously because findings may "yield information that may revolutionize the way we traditionally conceived the teaching-learning process" (Armour-Thomas, 1989, p. 35). Fang (1996) maintained that research on teachers' beliefs must be persisted with as it might generate "important findings that are of practical implications for teacher education" (p. 47).

<u>Beliefs: What are they?</u>

According to Clark and Peterson (1986), teachers' thought processes consist of: 1) teacher planning, which includes the thought processes that teachers engage in before, during, and after classroom interactions; 2) teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions – thoughts which occur during the process of teaching and decision making; and 3) teachers theories and beliefs– their fund of knowledge about people and objects which affects their planning, decision making, and classroom behavior. This general knowledge determines how teachers perceive, process and act upon information in the classroom (Munby, 1982). Rokeach (1968) maintained that although beliefs cannot be directly measured or observed, they can nevertheless be inferred from what people say and do. Researchers have used several methods to study a teacher's beliefs: questionnaires, interviews, think-aloud procedures, stimulated recall, journals, etc.

In the recent past, researchers have begun to understand the influence that beliefs have on the teaching practices of an individual, but very little attention has been paid to their nature and origin (Johnson, 1992). The problem with belief as a psychological construct is that it is neither easily defined, nor does it lend itself to empirical investigation. The term has a history of being

plagued by "definitional problems, poor conceptualizations, and differing understanding of beliefs and belief structures" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307).

Although the literature is strewn with definitions of beliefs, there appears to be little consensus among researchers. The term has been variously defined in the literature-- "episodic" (Nespor, 1987) "lay theories" (Holt-Reynolds, 1991), "constructs" (Mertz & McNeely, 1990), "images" (Calderhead & Robson, 1991), "folk pedagogy" (Bruner, 1996), "personal theories" (Richards & Freeman, 1996). In his seminal paper on the origin of structure and role of teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) argued that beliefs are formed very early in life through a process of "cultural transmission"; and they help the individual understand himself and the world around him. Pajares saw beliefs as "a statement of a relationship among other things accepted as being true" (p. 309). Beliefs not only have a filtering effect on our thinking and information processing, they also determine our behavior. Nisbett and Ross (1980) argued that our perception of the world is influenced by our beliefs, and thus, beliefs influence the ways in which events are understood and acted upon. Nespor (1987) referred to this pervading influence of beliefs as a "filter effect" and argued it played a crucial role in a teacher's thought and decision-making processes. To teachers, beliefs represent a valid reality, guiding what they think and how they act. Goodman (1988) thought of belief systems as "intuitive screens"; whenever a teacher came across a new idea s/he reacted to it intuitively rather than intellectually.

Cognitive psychologists maintain that beliefs determine one's idea of reality; this idea is echoed by Sigel (1985) and O'Laughlin (1989) when they refer to them as "socially constructed representational systems". The beliefs an individual has about a specific topic do not operate or exist in isolation, but are interrelated to all his other beliefs. Linde (1980) characterized this interrelationship as a "belief system" which she defined as a "set of beliefs which is coherent,

which is focused around some central issue and which is not held by everyone in a given culture" (p13). Although an individual may have several beliefs, not all have the same value; some may be more important to the individual than others (Sturtevant, 1996). Like language and culture, belief systems too are seen as social structures, which are negotiated and shared through interaction.

Where do beliefs about teaching come from?

We teach as we have been taught. (Bailey, 1996, p. 11)

Studies that have been carried out in the past twenty-five years suggest that beliefs about teaching and learning develop very early in one's life, from the time a child starts going to school. Once formed, these beliefs are highly resistant to change; modifications, if any, are nominal. Beliefs about what is good or bad teaching are developed during the hours that the student spends at school watching/observing different teachers in action. Lortie (1975) referred to this as the "apprenticeship of observation." During the hundreds of hours that they spend at school as students, they form opinions, build ideas about the essential qualities that go into the making of a great teacher; these beliefs are brought into the teacher education programs. Researchers findings suggest that some students form impressions about what constitutes good teaching as early as age six.

> By the time we receive our bachelor's degree, we have observed teachers and participated in their work up to 3,060 days. In contrast, teacher preparation programs (at the master's level) usually require (about) 75 days of classroom observation. What could possibly happen during these days to significantly alter the practices learned during the preceding 3, 060 days? (Kennedy, 1990, p. 4)

Beliefs, based on images of teaching acquired as students, play a crucial role in making sense of new information and acting as filters through which new information is sifted. While some of these beliefs may be similar to those that teacher educators wish to inculcate in their trainees, others may be idiosyncratic. This is to be expected, for the beliefs of an individual will vary depending upon his/her history and circumstances. "Student teachers are inclined to teach in the way they were taught and to model their practices on those they judged to be effective from personal experience" (Robinson, 1995, p 40). But the problem with beliefs acquired in this manner is that they present a one-sided view of teaching – from the perspective of students. The student-teachers' images of teaching are therefore incomplete, for although they see the "public face" of the teacher, they have no access to their private thoughts, their "backstage behavior" – the careful planning that goes on behind the scenes which often determine how they perform in the classroom. Because novice teachers have only a limited understanding of the teaching process, they tend to look toward their former teachers as role models. Lortie (1975) argued that students

> ….assess teachers on a wide variety of personal and student oriented bases, but only partially in terms of criteria shared with their teacher or with teachers in general. It is improbable that many students learn to see teaching in an ends-means frame or that they normally take an analytic stance toward it. Students are undoubtedly impressed by some teacher actions and not by others, but one would not expect them to view the differences in a pedagogical explanatory way. What students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles. (p. 62)

What novice teachers lack, argued Calderhead (1987) is "typificatory knowledge"; that is they had no knowledge of what to expect of students, what their classroom management problems were likely to be, etc.

While the beliefs acquired during the "apprenticeship of observation" period determine, to a considerable extent, a teacher's beliefs about teaching, they are not the only source. Richards and Lockhart (1994) and Nisbitt and Ross (1980) identified several sources which played a crucial role in the gradual build up of a teacher's belief system. Some of them are presented below.

1. Institutional factors: the beliefs of a teacher are often influenced by the roles s/he is allowed to play and these are often determined by the institutional and administrative structure. For example, a school may have a rigid hierarchical structure where the principal and senior teachers make all decisions. The novice teacher is not only told what to teach, but is often compelled to teach within a framework or philosophy established by the institution, which may or may not be akin to the teacher's beliefs.

2. Cultural factors: The practices that one adopts in the classroom depend on what the assumptions are about teaching, teachers and learners. In India for example, learning implies mastering a body of knowledge, which the teacher presents to the learner in small chunks. The pupil's job is to reproduce the knowledge that was given to him/her (Sriraman & Krishnaswami, 1994). This view of learning is radically different from the notion of learning held in most western cultures. According to Posner (1985) if one wishes to have a complete understanding of teaching, then one should attempt to understand the social and physical context in which it is taking place. Some of the factors that should be kept in mind for the language teacher are (Richards, 1998; p. 12)

- Language policies of the country

- Community factors (expectations of parents, community support)

- Sociocultural factors (status of the language, cultural values)

- Administrative practices (workload, duties)

- School culture (established beliefs and practices)

- Teaching resources (books, syllabus, etc)

3. Methodology: the methodology a teacher uses in the classroom determines the role s/he is going to play, for "implicit in every methodology are particular assumptions about the role of the teacher and about how students should learn" (Richards, 1998, p. 101). The methodology will to a great extent be determined by the personality of the teacher. The beliefs or personal theories that a teacher has often act as a filter to their development as a teacher. Johnson (2000) maintains that a teacher's beliefs often act as an interpretative framework, through which s/he makes sense of general teaching skills, and help make pedagogical decisions.

An individual acquires his/her beliefs through the dual process of enculturation and social construction. This is the view of Van Fleet (1979), who maintained that cultural transmission consists of enculturation, education and schooling. Enculturation is the incidental learning that takes place throughout an individual's life. Education, which could be either formal or informal, provides a much more directed learning and attempts to bring the behavior of the individual in accordance with the cultural expectations. Schooling is the specifics of learning outside the home. The next section reviews some of the research work done on teacher beliefs.

Review of Research on Teacher Beliefs

Teachers do hold implicit theories about students, the subjects they teach and their

teaching responsibilities and that these implicit theories influence teachers'

reactions to teacher education and to their teaching practice. (Fang, 1996, p. 51)

The relatively small body of research (Nettle, 1998; Rust, 1994; Tillema, 1994) on how

teacher-education programs influence teacher beliefs suggests: (1) beliefs held by pre-service

teachers are impervious to change, (2) teacher-training programs do bring about nominal changes

in beliefs and, (3) true changes in beliefs are brought about only when teachers enter the working

environment; beliefs are altered by the context in which an individual teaches.

Beliefs do not change

It has been argued that one of the reasons why the beliefs of teacher trainees do not

change even after undergoing a teacher training program is that there is no need for novice

teachers to redefine their context (Posner, 1985). The classroom and the teaching practices that

are customarily followed in them are very similar to those the preservice teachers have been a

witness to during their years at school. As such, there is little or no need for them to change their

existing beliefs. Lortie (1975) and Edmundson (1990) maintained that it is this familiarity with

the context, which made the students complacent; they were not compelled to question the

teaching practices of the past. Students enter and leave teacher-training programs with their

beliefs intact; what constituted good teaching practice in their school experiences constitutes it

now (Lortie, 1975). Beliefs that students acquire as observers tend to remain "status quo"

(Florio-Ruane & Lensiere, 1990), rather than leading to state-of-the-art practices. Instead of

becoming agents of reform, pre-service teachers become upholders of the traditional teaching practices (Edmundson, 1990, Robinson, 1995). As Ginsberg and Newman (1985) put it:

> Indeed, if preservice teachers enter programs treating political and economic inequalities as natural or unproblematic (and if they are not successfully encouraged to critically examine these issues during their program), we may have part of the explanation for the tendency among teachers to function as professional ideologists, i.e., apologists for at least preservers of the status quo. (p 49)

Nisbett and Ross (1980) maintained that an individual's early experiences are so powerful that they remain unchanged even when the individual is confronted with contradictory evidence.

> ….the extent to which preservice teachers understand and use new curricular approaches appears to be influenced by the amount of congruence between the new approach and the preservice teachers' initial beliefs about teaching, learning and content. (Rovengo, 1993, p. 615)

Research has suggested that when confronted by evidence that contradicts their beliefs, teachers either twist the evidence to support their beliefs, or they disregard it altogether. While beliefs acquired early are impervious to change, those that have been formed late in life remain vulnerable (Sturtevant, 1996). Employing Piaget's notion of "assimilation" and "accommodation", Posner, Strike, Hewson and Hertzog (1982) attempted to explain why the early-acquired beliefs seldom change. When the new information can be easily fitted into existing beliefs, it is called assimilation; and when the new information is such that it forces one to reorganize existing beliefs it is called "accommodation". In their study, Posner, Strike,

Hewson, and Hertzog found that students refused to accommodate new contradictory information and instead chose to reject it; thereby keeping their beliefs intact. Schommer, (1990) too, found that individuals distorted new information to assimilate it into their current beliefs. "Beliefs color not only what individuals recall, but how they recall it, if necessary completely distorting the event recalled in order to sustain the belief" (Pajares, 1992, p. 317).

Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Hertzog (1982) argued that in order to accommodate conflicting information into their present set of beliefs, several conditions must be present.

First, they must understand that new information represents an anomaly. Second, they must understand that new information should be reconciled with existing beliefs. Third, they must want to reduce the inconsistencies among the beliefs. And last, efforts at assimilation must be perceived as unsuccessful. (p. 321)

In most cases, the authors concluded, students were unaware of the anomalies and therefore continued to assimilate, rather than accommodate.

These findings are similar to those of Bird and Anderson's (1993). The attempt of the authors was two-fold. First, they sought to engage students majoring in elementary education in dialogue about their existing beliefs about teaching and learning, and second, they wanted to provide alternative beliefs available in the literature. It was expected that such an exercise would result in the prospective teachers' beliefs being changed. The authors maintained changes in the existing belief system can be brought about by providing:

…. opportunities to notice and examine their entering beliefs, by provocative encounters with vivid and plausible alternatives to their own models of teaching and learning, and by activities that encourage and assist them to recognize the

differences between the ideas and images they brought with them and those they

are offered. (Bird & Anderson, 1993, p. 254-255)

The teacher preparation program, however, did little to change the existing beliefs of potential teachers. In the opinion of the authors, the early beliefs remained unchanged because of the potential clash between the two communities of knowledge, one based in schools and the other in the university. In this clash, it is the cooperating teacher and not the university professor who emerges victorious. The teacher educators at the university attempt to woo the students into their communities,

….so they might form some critical appreciation of the various ways that scholars

have talked about teaching, consider the array of ways that skillful teachers have

attempted to teach, and accept the resulting complexity and ambiguity as a fact

and way of life. (Bird & Anderson, 1993, p. 267)

The students, on the other hand, wish to join a community that teaches them how to act as teachers - a community which doesn't merely talk and write about teaching, but one which deems action imperative. Nisbett and Ross (1980) concluded that the beliefs of teacher-trainees remained unchanged because they had no desire to join a community which merely talked and wrote about the work. Novice teachers relied on their private beliefs because they provided insights on how to act and talk as classroom teachers.

This view of teacher educators (university professors) and cooperating teachers conspiring to create two different communities is also discussed in Cherland's (1989) study. He argued that while cooperating teachers spent their time with the students undermining the work of the educators, teacher educators in the universities create among student teachers a sense of dissatisfaction in the teaching practices that are generally followed in schools. The confused

student, wondering whose ideas he should subscribe to, is finally compelled to take recourse to his own beliefs. "The urge to change and the pull to do what is familiar create a central tension in teachers' thinking about their practice" (Freeman, 1992, p. 4).

Johnson (1998) attempted to understand and arrive at teacher beliefs through the concept of images. Like the word beliefs, the concept of an image "remains somewhat vague, it does provide an indicator of the teachers' understandings about teaching and their conceptions of themselves as teachers, and ultimately makes their beliefs more accessible to analysis" (p. 443). Johnson found that the four participants who took part in her study had images about second language learning and second language teachers that were: (1) episodic in nature: memories relating to particular events or people, and (2) general images that were abstracted from prior/anticipated teaching/learning experiences. The four teachers' beliefs about second language teaching and second language teachers arose from: (a) images of their formal language experiences, (b) images of their informal learning experiences, (c) images of themselves as teachers, and (d) images of teacher training programs. Although the four student teachers in this study had very negative images of their formal language learning experiences, the images nevertheless had a powerful impact on the teachers' perceptions and actual instructional practices.

Unlike Pajares (1992), who argued that teacher education programs were incapable of changing individual beliefs that had been shaped and acquired through early formal experiences, Johnson (1998) contended that the teacher trainees were unable to effect any changes because they provided no alternative images with which to replace their old images. In order to bring about changes in instructional practices, teachers require "encounters with alternative instructional and alternative images of teachers" (p 451). The function of any teacher education

program is therefore to provide alternative images, which were close to an individual's projected image of him/herself as teacher, and provide a safe environment where s/he can experiment with new images. If such images and such an environment were denied to the novice teachers, they would leave the teacher training programs having merely "fine tuned" their earlier beliefs (Hollingsworth, 1989).

Lortie (1975) made a similar point when he argued that teacher training programs are doomed to failure unless the instructors take cognizance of the students' prior experiences and also help them overcome their sense of isolation. He argued that since novice teachers are overwhelmed by a sense of anxiety about how to manage their classrooms, and since unlike the experienced teacher they had no "routines" which they could fall back on, they invariably used practices that their former teachers had adopted.

Researchers have also found that often teachers are unable to adopt the practices that reflect their own beliefs. Yim (1993) found that although her ESL teachers in Singapore believed in communicative language teaching, the practices they were compelled to adopt in the language classrooms did not correspond with their expressed beliefs. The argument put forward by Yim is that the exam-based system of education in Singapore compelled the teachers to abandon their beliefs. Other factors which prevented teachers from adopting the practices reflecting their beliefs were the need to follow a prescribed curriculum, lack of suitable resources, and students' ability level.

The filters created by prior beliefs often lead to miscommunication between teacher educators and pre-service teachers. Holt-Reynolds (1991) found that the different worldviews that these two groups of individuals had, often resulted in words taking on very different meanings. For example, for pre-service teachers for whom teaching meant transmitting

information to the students, listening to a lecture was deemed to be "active participation." For the teacher-trainer, on the other hand, who looked upon a teacher as someone who helped students become producers of knowledge, listening was seen as a passive activity.

Grossman (1990) studied six high school teachers of English and attempted to determine the sources of knowledge which informed their teaching practices. All six were well-educated, had a passion for literature, and were well-informed about the subject. Three teachers had no prior teaching experience and had undergone no teacher education program. When these teachers took jobs in high schools and began to teach, they relied on their apprenticeship of observation and on their prior knowledge, rather than on planning. One of them, Lance, a Ph.D. student in comparative literature, while trying to teach ninth grade students, adopted more or less the same techniques that his own teachers had used when he had been an undergraduate student. He did not join a program on teacher education because he believed that such courses were "too airy fairy." He believed that in order to become a good teacher all he needed to do was to be thorough with the subject matter. Perhaps what was more interesting was that Lance wanted his ninth grade students to have the same understanding of literature as he had.

> Lance did not seem to distinguish between his own knowledge and understanding of a text and his goals for teaching that text to students. In teaching Romeo and Juliet, Lance's implicit goal seemed to be to help students achieve his own sophisticated understanding of the play. Lance's difficulties in rethinking the play for freshman English also illustrate some of the limitations of learning from experience. (p.38)

A student-teacher believes that the pupils too share his/her perception of teaching. "In constructing images of teachers, novices may extrapolate from their own experiences as learners,

in essence, assuming that their pupils will possess learning styles, aptitudes, interests, and problems similar to their own. This may partially explain why novices' images of pupils are usually inaccurate" (Kagan, 1992, p 145). When the six teachers taking part in Grossman's study (1990) were asked to design a course in literature for ninth grade students, the three untrained teachers opted for books which either interested them or with which they were familiar. On the other hand, experienced teachers and those who undergone teacher training chose books which they believed would interest the students.

Joraman and Gabreile (1998) argued that teacher beliefs are often reinforced through everyday experience – for example, movies like "To Sir with Love", "Dangerous Minds" and "Mr. Holland's Opus" seem to suggest, that all a teacher needs to do in the classroom is motivate students. If this is achieved, learning will automatically take place.

Cuban (2001) argued that one of the reasons technology has not made inroads into the educational setting is because teachers do not wish to change their existing practices. While policymakers consider technology to be value-neutral devices, practicing teachers do not consider them to be so. The introduction of technology brings about changes in the class chemistry, often compelling teachers to alter age-old classroom practices. "It is, in part, because of the potential of these new technologies to alter existing social practices of teaching and learning that teachers at all levels have expressed ambivalence about these powerful machines" (p 164). Teachers who believe that a classroom should be teacher-dominated rather than student-centered will either not use the available technology or will merely use it in a way that preserves existing practices. It was found that most teachers used the available technology to do basically what they have always done: communicate with parents and administrators, prepare syllabi, record grades, prepare handouts, and email colleagues. The only way that computers will

become an integral of school and universities, Cuban (2001) argued, is for teacher beliefs about teaching and learning to change.

The idea that beliefs acquired early in ones' life are impervious to change is echoed by Sturtevant (1996) as well. She claimed that during the later stages of an individual's career, beliefs acquired early became even more firmly entrenched. Freeman (1996) maintained "the memories of instruction gained through their 'apprenticeship of observation' function as de facto guides for teachers as they approach what they do in the classroom" (p. 3). Some researchers who have shown that beliefs can be changed, however, challenge this view. The literature relating to this is discussed in the next section.

Beliefs do change

While most studies seem to indicate that teacher education programs fail to alter the beliefs of teachers, a few suggest changes, however temporary, are possible. Rust's study (1994) provides one such example. He found that many of the students left teacher education programs with idealistic notions of the teaching-learning process – teacher as "facilitator", and students as "constructors of knowledge". These beliefs, however, were often discarded when the novice teacher set foot in his new working environment. Rust argued that these "espoused beliefs" of the trainees were merely a "patina" which the individual developed during the teacher education program, and though they remained dominant during the training program, teachers were often compelled to cast them off during their "encounters with the real world of schools" (p 215). The reason for reverting to the prior beliefs was that students were largely "unaware of those organizational, administrative, and interpersonal forces that are likely to influence their lives in schools" (p 216). Rust believes most training programs fail to bring about changes in the beliefs

of teachers because instead of focusing on the "backstage behavior" of teachers in the school environment, they merely highlight their "frontstage" behavior. Freeman (1996) argued:

> ….although people have been learning to teach language for a long time, few in our field have paid much attention to understanding how the processes of teacher learning actually unfold or the knowledge and experience that underlie those processes. Thus most conventional practices in language teacher education have operated like hand me down stories, folk wisdom shared as "truths" of the profession with little other than habit and convention on which to base them (p. 351).

The findings of Nettle's study (1998) are similar to those of Rust's. Nettle argued that practice teaching programs could bring about a change in the beliefs of potential teachers, provided the practices given to the students were more "task oriented." He contended that the stability in teachers' beliefs may be seen as a product of an active process of balancing pre-existing beliefs and present reality. Nettle's research work suggested that the development of beliefs continued during an individual's career and that supervising teachers played a crucial in determining teacher beliefs.

Tillema's (1994) answer as to why teacher education programs played little or no role in changing the already existing beliefs is the "congruence hypothesis". He argued that new knowledge provided by courses would be integrated into an individual's belief system only if it is congruent with the teacher's pre-existing conception of teaching. "Whenever existing cognitions and beliefs are not congruent with the information presented and delivered in training, the acquisition of new skills and competencies will be hampered" (p. 602). The author recommended that teacher training programs should change their approach from "concept based

training approach" to "experienced based approach" – i.e., programs instead of presenting information without taking into consideration any of the students' prior beliefs, should be redesigned in such a manner that they gave "explicit attention to what participants bring with them into the course" (p. 602). Tillema further argued, "….knowledge about the learners allows the trainer to better match the presentation of training content with the existing knowledge and beliefs, resulting in a more meaningful and guided knowledge acquired by the professional" (p 603). The study done by Tillema is different from that of Bird and Anderson (1993) and Johnson (1994) in that he looked at training programs which had been redesigned after the beliefs of the student-teachers had been determined.

The 146 students majoring in special education who took part in Tillema's (1994) study were split into two groups: one in which the training program did not take cognizance of the students' beliefs; the other, in which the students' beliefs were determined and the course was then restructured to match them. Findings suggested that the greater the congruence between teacher' beliefs and what was presented in the training, the more likely learning was to take place. By taking into account the earlier beliefs, programs can bring about a change in the beliefs of the teachers.

Grossman's (1990) study, discussed earlier in the chapter, suggested that teacher education programs could bring about changes in the implicit beliefs of teachers. She found that the three teachers of English who did undergo a teacher-training program began to alter their views of teaching English. For example, before the teacher education program, one of the teachers saw the teaching of literature as an exercise in textual analysis. Therefore when he taught Shakespeare, he went through the play line by line, explained the meaning of each word, and commented on the imagery used. He attempted to teach literature at a level that he himself

understood. After going through the program the trainee began to look at the play (Hamlet) from the point of view of the students and tried to make connections between their lives and a character in the play. The program enabled the teacher to move from being text dependent to being text independent. As Grossman put it, the teaching of literature became less an exercise in textual analysis and more a sharing of experiences between the characters in a play and the students.

McDiarmid (1990), as discussed in Jorman and Gabrielle (1998), is another study that targeted the prior beliefs of teachers about the teaching-learning process. In this study, pre-service teachers observed an experienced mathematics teacher in action. Before observing each presentation, the trainees were asked to write about and discuss the topic. They discussed the expert's lesson plans and goals – before and after the class. Later, the students were asked to teach the same topic. McDiarmid found that although the students did become aware of their prior beliefs and the limitations of such beliefs, they did not succeed in altering them. Students for the most part disregarded everything that was at variance with their earlier beliefs.

Jorman and Gabriele (1998), like Nespor (1987), argued that beliefs act as a gatekeeper to change throughout the teacher-education program. In their study, Jorman and Gabriele (1998) asked 53 participants majoring in elementary and secondary education to write down their definition of teaching and learning. The methods course, unlike the earlier ones offered by the department, did not start with a preconceived syllabus. Instead, students were asked to list the areas they would like to discuss. Starting with the area of classroom management – an area which all students wanted discussed – the trainers ensured that all topics neatly dovetailed into what had gone on in the earlier class. This nesting of topics kept the students' interest alive. When at the end of the course, students were given an open-ended questionnaire and asked to

define 'learning'; as many as 49% of the students claimed that a significant change had been brought about in their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Knowles and Holt Reynolds' study (1992) too supports the contention that teacher education programs can bring about nominal changes in the beliefs of teachers. The authors found that the classroom behavior of the five pre-service teachers who participated in the study, were deeply impacted by their past experiences. In the end, Knowles and Holt Reynolds found, "subsequent changes, induced by teacher education programs, regarding the way in which pre-service teachers thought about teaching and education, seemed to occur to a minimal degree over the duration of the pre-service year" (p. 23).

Zeichner and Liston (1987) arrived at a similar conclusion. In a study of 13 student-teachers, they found that students selected from the training program whatever experiences and information suited their own beliefs. In the process, the professional training program merely elaborated on their existing beliefs, instead of radically altering them.

Bramald, Hardman and Leat (1995) argued that one of the potential drawbacks in the research design of most studies on teacher beliefs was the small sample size. In order to overcome this shortcoming, they looked at the teaching and learning beliefs of 162 students who were enrolled in a one-year secondary postgraduate certificate course in education. Unlike most studies, the students in this study did not comprise a homogeneous group; they were majoring in several different subjects – English, history, geography, religion, etc. Findings indicated that although the majority of students at the end of the study did not show any significant changes in their thinking, there were, however, substantial changes between different curriculum groups. Students majoring in geography in particular displayed a remarkable movement towards a pupil-

centered approach to teaching. Based on this, the authors argued that all training programs should be viewed as a variable, rather than as a constant, as most studies had done.

> The most important reservation about the minimal effect of training courses on students is that pre-service training courses have been generally viewed as a constant and not as a variable. The evidence presented in this article suggests that courses are not homogeneous and that there are important differences both between and within courses which may explain the seeming lack of impact described in earlier studies. (Bramald, Hardman, & Leat, 1995, p. 30)

For most teachers, their own experiences as learners have shaped their conceptions of how something should be taught (Johnson, 1998). Language teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers and the instructional practices that they adopt in the classroom are influenced by their own experiences in the language classroom. Such images are part of their "epistemic" beliefs – that is, beliefs of which they are not consciously aware, but like intuitive screens, color their perceptions, thoughts, and actions in the classroom. Johnson reported,

> Their epistemic beliefs are so strong that even though teachers are aware of the inadequacy of their beliefs and hold projected images of themselves as teachers that directly conflicted with these beliefs, they often feel powerless to alter their instructional practice because they have had few, if any alternative images of teachers and teaching on which to base their classroom practices. (p. 38)

Johnson (1996) also argued that teacher-training programs could be used to change the beliefs of teachers provided they made the teachers reflect on their implicit beliefs. This can be accomplished provided teacher preparation programs:

….put forth a realistic view of teaching that recognizes the realities of classroom life and adequately prepares pre-service teachers to cope with those realities. This means providing pre-service teachers with knowledge about the day-to-day operations of managing and teaching in real classrooms. It also means providing pre-service teachers with knowledge about what students are like, to see students, not as 'faceless blobs' but as individuals with unique needs, interests, aptitudes, and personalities." (p. 47)

Instead, what most programs did was to provide meaningless tasks. "We wrote sample lesson for no one, created fake teaching units for classes we would never teach, designed science projects that no one would ever conduct, and pretended to teach each other in mock simulations" (Johnson, 1998, p. 52). She maintained that one way of getting the teacher to reflect on his/her beliefs was through the process of "robust reasoning." Robust reasoning emerges from within the teachers themselves through the process of critical reflection. Johnson used the term "reasoning" rather than "thinking" as Clark and Peterson (1986) did because she was more interested in determining "how teachers think" rather than "what" teachers think during the teaching process. Grossman (1990) concluded that teacher training programs can make a difference provided they create opportunities for novice teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and determine for themselves if there are any inconsistencies between what they actually do in the classroom and what they would like to do. Freeman (1996) argued that it is the function of all teacher training programs to help "teachers renegotiate the meanings of their actions and thus construct different, more critical, ways of understanding what they are doing in the classroom" (p. 222).

Summary

The chapter gave a brief historical account of the evolution of researchers' investigation into the thinking processes of a teacher. It also presented the various definitions of "beliefs" used by researchers, and reviewed some of the important studies done in the area of teachers' beliefs. In the next chapter, I will review some of the research work done in the area of media use in the classroom in developed nations like the United States.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA IN EDUCATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I look at the introduction of technology in schools and colleges in developed nations and its resulting impact or lack thereof on teaching practices. The first section examines why media have failed to bring about a revolution in teaching practices in a developed nation like the United States. The second section briefly reviews why the media may not succeed in democratizing education, and the third looks at some of the work done in the area of media use in the second/foreign language classroom.

The Media Revolution: Waiting for Godot?

The media are seen in India, as they are perceived everywhere, as something that is going to revolutionize the current educational system; their introduction is going to remove the disparity that exists among the schools in cities and villages. Unfortunately, this has not happened. Teachers in India have shown little or no enthusiasm for incorporating the media into the language classroom. But then, this has been the case everywhere. Most teachers across the globe have demonstrated a blasé attitude towards the media. While developed nations like the United States have invested considerable sums of money into technology, they have not received the kind of dividends that they had hoped for; teaching strategies remain the same as they were before. But unlike in India, a considerable amount of soul searching has been going on in the developed nations as to why the media have not revolutionized education. The following brief

review of research done in the United States provides some insights into why the media revolution has not brought about the radical transformation that it was expected to.

> Books will soon become obsolete in the schools. Scholars will soon be instructed through the eye. It is possible to teach every branch of human knowledge with the motion picture. Our school system will be completely changed in ten years.

This was the prophecy made by Thomas Edison in 1913. It has yet to come true. The print medium has not become a dinosaur; it continues to be the staple diet in most school environments across the world. Yet the views expressed by the inventor have been echoed by others. In the late 1950s and 1960s, educational television was hailed as the medium that would revolutionize classroom teaching. Now, the focus of attention has shifted to computers and satellite communication. Consider the following two quotations on computers:

> A shovel extends man's arms: a bow and arrow extends his reach in another way, clothing extends his skin: an automobile extends his leg: the telephone extends his voice and hearing: and writing extends his memory and now computers, extend man's central nervous system. (Mcluhan, 1964, p. 31)

> Before we can get the educational revolution rolling, we need to recognize that our public schools are low tech institutions in a high tech society. The same changes that have brought cataclysmic change to every facet of business can improve the way we teach student and teachers. And it can also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of how we run schools.
>
> (Louis Gerstner, Jr., IBM's CEO, cited in Cuban, 2001, p. 19)

The two are nearly forty years apart! The cycle of ecstasy and disappointment begins anew with every new technological invention, but the promised revolution is yet to come.

<div align="center">Media in American Schools</div>

Many corporate leaders, academics and practitioners believe that traditional forms of teaching (reliance on textbooks, whole class instruction, lecturing, and multiple choice tests) are obsolete in the information age. (Cuban, 2001, p. 14)

Though the revolution has been slow in coming, reformers continue to promote the use of technology and hail it as a possible solution for many of the problems confronted by teachers and students in schools. In the past twenty years, concerted attempts have been made at the policy level to integrate the media, particularly computers, into the school curriculum. Schools, however, both in the U.S and in other developed nations, have been slow to adopt them. In 1996, President Clinton made available $2 billion dollars in order to achieve what has now come to be known as the Four Pillars of education:

Modern computers and the learning devices will be accessible to every student.

Classrooms will be connected to one another and to the outside world.

Educational software will be an integral part of the curriculum and as engaging as the best video game.

Teachers will be ready to use and teach with technology.

While statistics indicate the number of schools in the U.S having computers and the number of students and teachers using them have increased considerably between 1981 and 2001, for most part, computers remain marginalized in schools. They are often viewed as "add ons" by teachers and are seldom integrated into the actual teaching process. Therefore even though the number of

computers in schools has increased – the national student- to-computer ratio in America was 125 students to a computer in 1981, in 1991 it was 18 to one, and now it has been further brought down to 5 students per computer- the percentage of teachers making use of these facilities in their teaching has remained the same (Cuban, 2001). The former President and his policy makers assumed that if access to technology were provided, teachers would automatically incorporate it into their teaching practices. This however has not happened for many reasons.

Lack of training

According to a study done by the Federal Government's Office of Technological Assessment (1995), most teachers felt totally inadequate to use the media in the classroom; a mere 28% of new teachers felt equipped to use media in their teaching. In 1999, the numbers went down even further when the National Center for Educational Statistics found that only 20% of the teachers felt confident that they would succeed in integrating technology into their classroom practices. In a study conducted by The U. S. Department of Education (2000a), they found

> ….new teachers entering the profession are still not being adequately trained to teach with technology….fewer than half the nations teacher preparation institutions require students to design and deliver instruction using technology, and that even fewer require technology use in the student teaching experience (p. 14).

As a result, existing equipment in schools often went unused or under-used because teachers were not aware how technology could enhance their teaching and student learning. Kraus, Hoffaman, Oughton and Rosenblath (1994) contended many of the available technologies

went unused even by newly recruited teachers who had hands-on experience with the media because there was a lack of focus on integration of technology in teacher education programs, resulting in insufficient role models for practicing teachers to try and emulate. Slick (1995) argued that university faculty members could serve as models provided that they themselves are convinced of the need to change. It is because of insufficient role models that preservice teachers hold very simplistic notions regarding how technology can be used to enhance student learning; research work (Hargrave & Sadera, 2000; Wang, 2002) has suggested that if these teachers were to use technology, they would be more likely to use it as a teacher centered tool than a student-centered one.

Most teacher trainees, however, when they enter the profession have little or no knowledge of how technology can be employed in their professional practice (Office of Technological Assessment, 1995).   Despite the lack of media use in the classroom by most teachers, 85% of the funds earmarked for technology are being spent on acquiring new hardware and software. A meager 15% is used to conduct workshops that provide teachers with hands on experience with media use in the classroom. According to Cuban (2001), schools in the United States spent $ 3.3 billion on hardware, software and networking related costs in 1995 which increased to 5.5 billion during 1998-1999. Policy makers, the promoters of technology have generally assumed that the presence of technology in the classroom will automatically result in greater use on the part of the teachers. "Schools have assumed that all preservice teachers will 'automatically' complete their experience at a college of education and graduate well prepared to integrate technology into their future classrooms; presumably because they have grown up comfortable, with the technology" (Schrum, Skeele, & Grant, p. 258).

Researchers, however, disagree with this stand. They maintain that it is not enough to put technology or the media at the teacher's disposal, but one has to ensure that they are integrated into the teaching process; and for this to happen the teachers need to be adequately trained (Burke 1994; Schrum, 1995).

Teachers who have solid technology training are more confident and more apt to use technology creatively as a tool to connect education to students' lives and aspirations. But unfortunately, most teachers today have neither the training nor the time to take advantage of these possibilities. (Mcdonald & Elias, 1996, p. 27)

Research in the area of computer use suggests that student-teachers and teachers with prior experience with technology have a positive attitude towards media use in the classroom (Drazdowski, 1993), and those who have little or no experience are reluctant to experiment with them. Unfortunately, even the techno-enthusiasts fail to incorporate the media into their teaching practices on a regular basis as most teacher education programs offer little or no role models for them to try and emulate (Kraus, Hoffman, Oughton & Rosenbluth, 1994). In most universities the lecture continues to be the dominant method of classroom instruction – the lecture is used 53% of the time, while computers are used only 17% of the time (Sax, Astin & Korn, 1999). Morgan (2000) found that even colleges of education used a predominantly traditional model of instruction, one in which technology played a supportive, rather than a predominant role. It is for this reason he argued that

….reform in education must begin with the type of educator in the classroom. All the dollars spent on resources and equipment will do little to alter the day-to-day realities of the learning process unless preservice and inservice teachers begin to

have opportunities to learn new ways to conduct the business of education (p.

1315).

Byrum and Cashman (1993) found that even colleges of education used a predominantly

traditional model of instruction, one in which technology played a supportive, rather than a

predominant role.

Often the training programs that are provided to teachers are totally inadequate.

"Traditional staff development tends to be a four hour session after school when everyone is

tired and focused on other issues. Frequently the school hires an expert who arrives, delivers the

program, and goes home" (Schrum, 1999, p. 84).

This method of inoculating teachers with information within a short duration of time has

failed miserably. There is a need to make the training programs more hands on, longer in

duration; also, there is a need to conduct them in an environment where the participants do not

feel threatened. Researchers like Mehlinger (1997) determined that more than 30 hours of

training are required before a teacher becomes comfortable enough with technology to use it in

the classroom. Schrum (1995) suggested that this problem of training teachers can be overcome

provided colleges of education in universities were willing to make an investment by providing

ongoing and collaborative assistance.

> Core groups of educators must be supported with time, access, resources and
>
> administrative support if they are to become leaders in implementing
>
> telecommunications. Colleges of education, in conjunction with school districts,
>
> must be willing to make an investment in these areas. Follow-up support is
>
> necessary to maintain the progress and momentum. (Schrum, 1995, p. 228)

Others have maintained that the government, both at the Federal and the State levels, must vigorously follow a policy of providing training to teachers at regular intervals. Schrum, Skeele and Grant (2002-03) proposed that the training programs offered must be "continuous and appropriate for each individual's needs" (p. 258). In sharp contrast to this, Nason (1994) argued that even when workshops are conducted for the sake of teachers, there are hardly any takers. Most university education programs have been unsuccessful in their earlier attempts to integrate educational technology into the curriculum (Pedras, 1996). Currently, there is enormous pressure on teachers to use technology in the classroom, but the lack of a coherent method for integrating them into the curriculum is proving to be an obstacle. As a result, most teachers are inclined to adopt the method of teaching they have been exposed to as students (Robinson, 1995).

Lack of time

Another barrier is the lack of time. Teachers do not have time to invest in technology. Sammons (1994) found that it takes 150-200 hours to convert one course to electronic-supported lectures. In the present atmosphere of "publish or perish" that is prevalent in most universities, not enough teachers are willing to invest their time in developing such materials. Ester (1993) argued that practicing teachers seldom spent time developing software packages because there was little or no prestige associated with it. Furthermore, they were never taken into consideration when it came to career advancement. Schrum (1995) too found that the major obstacle preventing practicing teachers from learning about information technologies and becoming proficient in them was time. "It takes considerably longer to learn about using technology for personal use than it does to learn a new methodology" (Schrum, 1999, p. 85). As a result

teachers used computers that were available in their classroom to find information on the World Wide Web, stay in touch with parents, email colleagues, write lesson plans, and record grades. They did not use it to bring about changes in their teaching practices.

Lack of equipment and technical support

Very often it was the lack of equipment that proved to be the major impediment. A survey conducted by Knupfer (1993) suggested that 37% of the teachers listed the non-availability of computers as the main reason for the non-use of media in the classroom. Although in recent years the number of computers available in the classroom has increased, the distribution of technology and its use in the classroom depends to a considerable extent on the socio-economic status of the students. An Office of Technology Assessment study (1994) concluded that students from high-income families have far more access to computers in schools than do peers from low-income families. In a national survey conducted in 1999 by the U.S Department of Education, it was found that schools which had a high percentage of students living in poverty had fewer computers with multimedia capabilities and internet connections (National Center for Education Statistics). In a study conducted by Wright (1998), teachers who were technology enthusiasts professed that one of the main reasons that they quit the teaching profession was the lack of funding for technology in schools.

Another constant complaint that teachers have is the lack of technical support; when a piece of equipment breaks down, there is no one to fix it. Burke (1994) and Slick (1995), for example, maintained that in-service teachers required not only hands-on experience with the various media but also sustained technical support to maximize the creative options offered by technology. In the ideal situation, this would include technicians for the upkeep of the machines

and also the constant updating of the hardware and software. But with budgets earmarked for education shrinking across the globe, this is becoming less and less feasible.

Teachers are seldom consulted

Although politicians and policy makers have been keen on introducing technology in schools for nearly a century, they have seldom sought the opinions of teachers regarding this matter. For any reform to take place successfully in educational institutions, teachers' involvement is essential. "Teachers need compelling reasons to dramatically change their practice. If change is forced or mandated from administration, the result may be tenuous acceptance, without real change" (Schrum, 1999, p. 85). And this has been one the one of the problems of introducing technology into the classroom; the policy makers and classroom teachers have rarely discussed the matter. Teachers have been merely "told" that they should use technology, and as it very often happens, when one is compelled to do something, one does the job with a lot of resentment. As a result, with the exception of a few techno-enthusiasts, technology has hardly made any inroads into the school setting.

Teachers find no reason to change their behavior pattern

Cuban (1995) argued that for the most part the media have been unable to reshape schooling. Schools have changed very little in the last century, despite the fact that many new materials and modes of teaching (including media) have become available to the teacher. But it has been found that merely putting technology at the teacher's disposal does not lead to integration (Cuban, 2001). In most schools across the U.S. and the rest of the world, teachers still continue to be `transmitters', rather than `facilitators' of knowledge. Cuban (1995) argued

that conventional teaching methods have provided independence, self sufficiency and autonomy for the teacher; therefore patterns of behavior that have been rewarded in the past will be maintained until expectations of better rewards can be perceived.

While Fulton (1993) declared that it was the inertia of the school system which was to blame for the non-use of the media in the classroom; others like Cuban (2001) and Wild (1993) alleged that it was the teachers' beliefs which were the main source of impediment. They argued that the media could not be fully integrated into the classroom if the beliefs of teachers did not change. If the current beliefs continued to be held, then technology would be seen as an adjunct, rather than an integral part of the teaching process. Wellington (1990), for example, found that language teachers refused to incorporate computers because they felt that computing was the domain of subjects like mathematics and computer science and not language. Such beliefs were recalcitrant, in that they did not change. Wild (1995) contends that if beliefs of teachers seldom change, then the introduction of media into the classroom poses an enormous challenge to the teacher who has been brought up to believe that s/he is a dispenser of knowledge. While some researchers (Cuban, 1995; Slick, 1995) have been calling for a change in the style of teaching – from explicit to implicit – practicing teachers have been reluctant to adopt such practices since these practices are incompatible with their existing beliefs and expectations. The introduction of technology often changes the nature of classroom interaction (Waxman & Bright, 1993), often compelling the teachers to alter their roles from "captain of the ship to coach; from information giver to question asker" (Cuban, 1995, p. 9). To effect a change in the teaching practices requires a considerable change in the existing ideology, which has profoundly shaped what the teacher does or does not do in the classroom (Cuban, 1993). If the media are to play a pivotal role in the learning and teaching process, then the school systems need to undergo a metamorphosis. Sadker

and Sadker (1994) contended that the biggest obstacle to media use in the classroom was the traditional view of education that persists in schools, not only in the U.S., but all over the world. Teaching practices in schools have changed very little in the course of the century; teachers continue to be the 'transmitters' of knowledge, reducing students to passive consumers of information (Cuban, 1995; Sayers & Cummins, 1995).

> Cultural beliefs such as that teaching is telling, learning is listening, knowledge is subject matter taught by teachers and books, and the teacher-student relationship is crucial to any learning dominate popular practitioner thinking. ....These structures profoundly influencing how teachers teach, how students learn, and the relationship between adults and children in each classroom, are especially difficult to alter after a century of popular and practitioner acceptance. (Cuban, 1995, p. 198)

As a result, practicing teachers have adapted the available media to fit the grammar of the age-old practices; teachers that use them employ them in the least threatening way - for drill and practice exercises, seldom integrating them with other classroom activities (Cuban, 2001; McDonald & Elias, 1996). When used in this manner, students not only get bored by the repetitive and mundane nature of the tasks, but also begin to perceive technology as being supplemental.

Frequent changes in the technology and software

Another common problem faced by teachers is choosing the right technology and the right software from the wide assortment available. The frequent replacements of technology and software have often resulted in disillusionment amongst teachers.

Teachers need periods of stability in which they can become familiar with

software and can devise ways in which it can be used effectively in the classroom.

Without this time, they inevitably become discouraged, and reject technology in

the classroom. (Baron & Bruillard, 1994, p. 29)

Often there is hardly any software catering to the needs of the minorities. For example, ESL students are at a disadvantage because most educational software are designed with the English-proficient student in mind (Chisholm, 1995), as a result they seldom use computers for creative and problem solving activities (Zehr, 2001). Furthermore, even in language teaching/learning, most of the software produced for learners seem to be out of sync with the latest theories of language learning and pedagogical practices followed in the classroom. For example, several computer programs continue to adopt the structuralist approach rather than the communicative one that is currently in vogue. For media to be used in the classroom, the software should be based on the language theories followed by teachers. "Designers have to concentrate on designing active learning for the students and less on how we want to present the material with all the latest bells and whistles" (Finkelstein, 1995, p. 266).

Little administrative support

As early as 1977, Pincus and Pascal had argued that the school's implicit culture would not allow innovations to be adopted. Schools and other institutions are often hostile to technology because they are static places; and as organizations they remain durable by resisting change (Robinson, 1995). Studies showed that apart from the teachers' attitude towards the media, three other factors played a crucial role in determining whether media could be integrated into the school curriculum or not. These are the attitude of the principal, timetable arrangements,

and the location of the computer rooms in the school building. Mouza (2002-03), for example, found that strong administrative support was essential for any successful technology integration to take place. Unfortunately, in many cases, administrative help from the principal is usually not easily forthcoming for s/he views technology not as something that can enhance teaching, but as an adjunct to be used in the language lab. "For teachers to successfully integrate technology into their classroom, a well-planned, ongoing professional development program is required. Such a program needs to consider the school context as well as the individual teacher needs" (p. 287). These are some of the reasons researchers believe that technology has not brought about the kind of radical changes that it was expected to in most educational settings.

Media: The Great Leveler?

Even though teachers have exhibited inertia in using media for several reasons, policymakers in most developed nations have embraced them. Developing nations like India too are trying to make technology accessible to teachers. The assumption is that to survive in this modern world one must be technologically proficient and that it is the function of schools to prepare students for today's society.

> Today's students will live longer, use more information, interact with more people of other cultures, and witness rapid increases in change at unprecedented levels – all because of technology. Students must now use technology effectively to access, organize, analyze, and evaluate information and to communicate with other in meaningful ways using information of all kinds that is provided through multiple sources. (Fulton, 1999, p. 33)

Laws have been passed in American states like Texas to include technology as part of the pedagogy (Nason, 1994).

The argument put forward by many techno-enthusiasts that the inclusion of technology in the classroom will make education truly democratic as it levels the playing field to students from all walks of life is not altogether true. Research work done in the U.S and in Europe, particularly in the use of computers, suggested that technology does not bridge the gap between the haves and have-nots. On the contrary, it merely exacerbates inequalities among students and institutions. Work done by Fredman (1990), for example, indicated that even in the normal classroom setting, white students were given more opportunities to use computers than minority students. An Office of Technology Assessment study (1994) concluded that students from high-income families had far more access to computers in schools than did peers from low-income families. Research completed with ESL students suggested they have far less access to computers than students whose first language is English. Nussbaum (1998) referred to this as the great "digital divide".

> The digital divide also extends beyond the school. More economically advantaged
> children usually have access to information sources through Internet connections
> and microcomputers at home. Those who are more disadvantaged must rely upon
> limited school and public library resources. Minority students may be discouraged
> from accessing online content because of an absence of exposure to computers in
> general or because of a lack of racially and ethnically diverse information on the
> Internet. Finally, computers are often used as a reward for high achieving
> students, leaving out those students with poorer academic records, while some

students are simply not encouraged to use technology to fuel their interests in academics. (Mehlinger & Powers, 2003, p. 2519-2520)

It was not just the availability of computers, but the manner in which they were being used in the classrooms that were different. Studies conducted in Maryland revealed that while students in wealthier districts used computers to gather, organize and store information, those in the poorer districts employed them for drill, practice and test taking skills (Maryland State Department of Education, 2001). Kohl (2001) referred to this as "covert" racism.

….the methods and purposes of computer use often differ radically from school to school and from district to district: Sometimes computer use enhances learning for all students and sometimes it simply confers a new technology sheen on the low-level programs that have long been staple of education in the United States (Burnett, 1994).

Cultural factors too often play an influential role in coloring ones' perception of the media. For example, studies have compared the attitudes of American and Polish students (Paprzycki, 1995) and American and Taiwanese students (Liao, 1995) towards computers. In both these studies it was found that Americans expressed a more positive attitude because of the accessibility of the media in their country. Liao's study also suggested that students were strongly affected by society's reinforcement of sexual stereotypes; the study found that men had a more positive attitude towards computers than women. This gender difference in attitude towards the use of technology in the classroom was also found among teachers in Nigeria. Gehring (2001) found that even in a developed country like the United States only 15 percent of those taking the Advanced Placement exam for computer science were girls.

There are a number of factors that contribute to this gender difference, including limited number of female role models in computer related fields, adults who especially encourage boys to use the computer and computer games, and software that tends to target boys' interests more than that of girls. (Mehlinger & Powers, 2003, p. 2519)

Blyth (1999) found that students coming from a culture which emphasized the role of grammar had problems adapting to a class where technology played a pivotal role.

The foregoing paragraphs have highlighted the failure of technology to address the needs of the growing minorities/at risk students. There are studies, however, which suggest that technology use provides a risk-free environment for such students; and such an atmosphere leads to better attendance, achievement and behavior (Cuban, 2001). The promise that electronic media held out, however, in terms of revolutionizing the reach and efficacy of education seems to be unfulfilled. Although the media have not proved to be a panacea for all educational problems, they nevertheless still receive considerable attention. In the field of second language learning and acquisition, a considerable amount of research work has been done to determine how the media can be used to enhance language learning. The next section will briefly sketch some of the research work done employing different media.

Media and Second Language Learning

A considerable amount of research has been completed on how media can influence the second language learning process. Although there is no explicit mention of media in theories of second language learning, practicing teachers and researchers have conducted studies that show their effectiveness. Presently, there is a growing interest in using e-mail to improve a student's

writing skill (Elasmar & Cartrer, 1996, Eldred, 1991, Warschauer, 1996). There have also been a sprinkling of studies done in different parts of the world on the use of popular music in the ESL classroom (Cranmer & Laroy, 1992; Domoney & Harris, 1993; Horner, 1993; Laroy, 1993; Lowe, 1994); and these suggest that pop songs can play an important role in the teaching of all the four language-learning skills.

Unfortunately, findings such as these have not been incorporated into the theory of second language learning. Consequently, no persuasive arguments have been made to teachers to incorporate these ideas into practice. There is a lacuna between theory and practice, which needs to be bridged. In the next section I will briefly sketch some of the research work done with the various media in the language classroom.

Television

Research done with this medium suggests that it is a powerful motivator for teaching all the four skills of language - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Poon (1992) found the listening skills of ESL students in Hong Kong improved dramatically when T.V. news was used a source of comprehensible input. Similarly, Goldman (1993) found that closed captioning could be used to motivate intermediate and advanced level students to improve their reading skills. Markham (1993) found that closed captioning was especially useful when there was a low audio/video correlation. Molen and Walma (1997) compared recall of print and television news among 10 and 12-year-olds; they found that children who watched the news on television recalled more of the facts than the children who read the story in the newspaper. Research work done by Chu and Schramm (1975) suggested that attitudes towards instructional television are generally favorable among teachers as well as students, but they tended to be more favorable in

elementary than in secondary schools/colleges. Administrators appeared to have a more favorable attitude than teachers did.

Not all researchers have been positive about this medium, however. Cennamo (1995) argued that since television is a visual medium, students often regard it as a source of entertainment. Krendl (1986) found that of all the media used in the classroom, students viewed television as the least effective learning medium by a wide margin.

Video/Films

Like television, films and more recently video have been successfully employed in the classroom to teach the four skills. Macdonald (1991) asserted that this particular medium can be used to introduce ESL students to both language and culture. Markham (1992) found that the use of video helped students improve their listening comprehension and also expanded their cultural awareness.

Audio

Radio was one of the earliest media to be employed in classrooms. Recently, there has been a tremendous interest in the use of popular songs - the BBC broadcasts two programs - Pop World and Pop English - which attempt to teach English through pop songs. Practicing teachers (Lowe, 1994) have demonstrated that by providing the lyrics of songs to students and getting them to sing along enables them to acquire the suprasegmental (intonation patterns) features. Songs have also been found to be very useful in teaching the contracted forms of English. Laroy (1993) contended that since the lines in the songs are repeated several times, one can use them to teach grammar.

E-mail

Presently, there is a growing interest in using e-mail to improve a student's writing skill. (Davis and Ye-Ling, 1995; Forrest ,1993; Warschauer, 1996). In these studies, students e-mailed the native speakers of the language that they were attempting to learn. This resulted in greater cultural understanding and also an improvement in their writing skills. It was found that the anonymity of hiding behind a screen enabled the students to write more quickly and fluently. Cummins and Sayers (1995) argued that the 'asynchronicity' of e-mail gives the language learners the time to think about their responses. Computer based networks have also been employed to develop interactive learning and reduce tension between different ethnic groups. Cummins and Sayers (1995), for example, found that the use of e-mail not only motivated foreign language learners of Spanish to learn the language, but also the culture of the people.

Although the media do promote language learning, research suggests that fewer than 25% of the teachers who teach mainly LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students employ computers in their classrooms (Wiburg & Hurerta Macias, 1995). While the incorporation of the media have not brought about revolutionary changes in the classroom practices of teachers in schools and colleges, attempts continue to be made across the globe to promote their use. Educational policy makers in India have been no exception; they have advocated the use of media for the purposes of democraticizing education since India attained independence in 1947. In the 1960s they not only promoted the use of the radio to teach the sciences and humanities, but also languages like Hindi and English. The Department of Radio and Television was specifically set up at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad to design and produce programs, which would help schoolteachers across the country, teach the language. This was truly a novel idea as far as the teaching of English was concerned.

<u>My study</u>

In chapters 2 and 3, I attempted to highlight the fact that much of what teachers do in the classroom is determined by their implicit beliefs regarding teaching and learning. The growing body of research in this area suggests that teachers' beliefs, which are usually acquired very early in life, are difficult to change. Change can be brought about not through coercion but through self-reflection. Research has shown that when practicing teachers are asked to reflect on their practices and also provided alternative models of teaching which they can see and follow, changes begin to occur. But for these changes to take place, it is imperative that teachers become aware of their underlying beliefs. If these problems are not addressed then the chances of any program bringing about changes in teaching practices are remote.

For the past twenty years I have been attempting to bring about changes in the teaching practices of individuals without determining what their beliefs about teaching are. The fact that I have not met with much success is not surprising for the literature makes it clear that for any transformation to take place the teachers' implicit beliefs must be known. Without being aware of their implicit beliefs about teaching, any attempt to bring about changes in their current teaching practices is likely to be met with failure. Before I attempt to get my teachers in India to believe that the media can be used to teach English, I must begin to understand what these teachers' notion of teaching is and how these beliefs relate, if at all to media use.

In the emerging research stream of teacher beliefs studies, there are few studies that look at how teachers view the use of media. Moreover, there has been no work, to my knowledge, involving teachers from India. This study attempts to provide an insight into what ESL teachers' beliefs are about teaching English in India and how those beliefs impact on media use in the language classroom. Without such an insight, government programs and pronouncements about

making use of media to help Indian classrooms leapfrog into the future will be of little use. The findings will add to the growing literature base that has always been collected regarding beliefs.

Summary

The chapter examined why media have failed to bring about a revolution in teaching practices in a developed nation like the United States. It also reviewed why the media may not succeed in democratizing education; and since the present study was interested in determining what ESL teachers' beliefs were about teaching English in India and how these beliefs impacted on media use, the final section reviewed the research done on media use in the classroom – both in developing and developed nations. The next chapter will discuss the methodology that will be used in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the design and methods used to collect and analyze the data for the study. The chapter has been divided into six different sections. The first provides an overview of the research design. This is followed by a description of the context in which the study was conducted, and the next two sections provide information about the participants and the "role" assumed by the researcher. Section five informs the reader as to how the data were collected, and the final section on how they were analyzed. As stated in the earlier chapters, this study aimed to understand the existing beliefs of ESL teachers in India about teaching, and how these beliefs influence media use in the language classroom. A qualitative case design involving interviews and observations was adopted as it was considered the most suitable method to answer the research questions. The two major questions and the related sub questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India?

    a. How are these beliefs acquired?

    b. How do these beliefs relate to their own education?

    c. How do these beliefs relate to their perceptions of the English language?

    d. What is the influence of the local context (college) on their beliefs?

    e. What do they believe is the role of the English language teacher in facilitating language learning?

2. How do these beliefs influence media use in the language classroom?

    a. Do teachers believe that the language acquired through exposure to media is "good" or "useful"?

    b. What role have media played in their own learning of English?

    c. How comfortable are they with the media outside the classroom?

    d. What implications do these beliefs have for the government policy of promoting the use of media in classrooms?

Research Design

Over the years, researchers have adopted different methods to study the beliefs of teachers. A common method is the use of Likert-type questionnaires to which teachers indicate degree of agreement or disagreement with direct statements on beliefs. Another method has been a structured questionnaire where the participant is compelled to choose from a limited set of options given to him/her by the researcher. Munby (1984) argued against such approaches to study the beliefs of an individual. He said:

> While the items of the instrument generate a response, they may be doing so not because the teacher would necessarily have thought of the belief represented by the items but because the test developer did. In other words, the scores represent what the teacher says is believed when he or she is physically presented with various beliefs of interest to the researcher (and possibly identified by many other teachers), and these do not necessarily correspond to the beliefs which are paramount to the individual teacher's handling of the immediate and unique professional environment. (p.29)

Talking about the complex world of teaching Shulman (1986) commented:

> There is no 'real world' of the classroom, of learning and of teaching. There are many such worlds, perhaps nested within one another, perhaps occupying parallel universes which frequently, albeit unpredictably, intrude on one another. Each of these worlds is occupied by the same people, but in different roles and striving for different purposes simultaneously. (p.7)

As the people play out these different roles, in different contexts, they draw to a greater or lesser extent upon different beliefs, which in turn may influence how they handle their roles and the contexts. The present research aimed to understand the underlying beliefs of ESL teachers in India and the role those beliefs played in the teacher's complex world. The inquiry did not attempt to explain how things worked in a classroom, nor did it attempt to predict how things might work. Instead it aimed to make sense of the multiple worlds of teachers; thus a qualitative methodology was adopted. The fundamental belief of naturalistic philosophy is the idea that there is not one single world but many worlds or realities: "There exist multiple realities which are, in the main, constructions existing in the minds of people" (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p.81). These multiple realities are synonymous with Shulman's "multiple worlds". In sharp contrast to this, in the epistemological framework of the positivists, there exists only one reality and the researcher's aim was to capture this single reality. Beliefs as constructs are tacit; therefore, the research design adopted had to provide teachers with an opportunity to bring them to the surface. The aim was to understand the beliefs through the participants' own words. According to Creswell (1998) if the goal of a study was to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants, then the naturalistic framework was the most appropriate. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) stated, "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings,

attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings of people bring to them" (p. 3). The question therefore as to what ESL teachers' beliefs were about teaching English in India seemed best answered using qualitative methods.

As discussed in chapter two, determining what is happening inside a teacher's head is difficult. Pajares (1992), for example, maintained that the construct of belief does not lend itself readily to empirical investigation. Others like Erickson (1986) and Taylor (1995) contended that the beliefs that teachers have are often tacit; teachers in most cases, were not aware of their existence, and even if they were, they were not in a position to articulate them. Beliefs, since they belong to the area of thought processes which occur inside the heads of people, are unobservable (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Kagan (1992) identified a number of problems encountered when doing belief studies. She posited that the beliefs of a teacher cannot be inferred directly from his/her behavior, because teachers may adopt similar practices but for very different reasons. Like Erickson (1983) and Johnson (1994), she also noted "much of what teachers know or believe about their craft is tacit. For example, teachers are often unaware of their own beliefs, they do not always possess language with which to describe and label their beliefs..." (p.66). She therefore cautioned researchers against a style of direct questioning such as "What is your philosophy of teaching?" and characterized such methods as "an ineffective or counterproductive way to elicit beliefs" (p.62). Woods (1996) echoed very much the same idea when he stressed the difficulty of arriving at the beliefs of an individual.

> Even in an interview situation, direct questioning can produce misleading results....beliefs (and their interrelationships) may not be entirely consciously accessible, and teachers may, in responding to questions about generalized beliefs, answer according to what they would like to believe, or would like to

show they believe in the interview context. When a belief or assumption is articulated in the abstract as a response to an abstract question, there is a much greater chance that it will tend more towards what is expected in the interview situation than what is actually held in the teaching situation and actually influences teaching practices. (p.27)

Fang (1996) argued that the best way to arrive at the beliefs of teachers is by getting them to talk about their personal experiences and see how they have influenced or shaped their beliefs. The approaches Fang recommended for capturing the beliefs of teachers are life history, narrative, and autobiography – techniques generally used in qualitative research. Marshall and Rossman, (1995) for example, pointed out "several supplemental methods can be incorporated in the design of a (qualitative) study" (p. 86). Included in this long list of methods are narratives and life histories.

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) describe qualitative research or the naturalistic paradigm as including methods like "case study research, anthropological research, or ethnography" (p.31). While these authors along with Merriam (1988) see the case study as a "methodology", Stake (1998) sees it as an "object of study." Yin (1989) defined a case study as an inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context….and in which multiple sources of data are used" (p.23). Another reason for adopting a qualitative research design was that it was important that my understanding of teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India emerged from the data. The aim here was not to look for evidence that would prove an a priori hypothesis. To understand the phenomenon under study a "thick description" was required to provide the necessary data. Patton (1985) believed:

This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of the setting-what it means for the participants to be in the setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. (p.1)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Merriam (1988) argued that a case study not only provided the rich data required, but that it was also the best way to understand a phenomenon for which there was an improvement in practice. The case study has also been described as a "monographic approach" that can include interviews, observation and field study. The study itself may involve observing the facts, questioning participants about subjects that cannot be directly observed, and speaking to outside expert sources who may provide an insight into the phenomenon being studied. The case study has also been denounced for its lack of methodological rigor and lack of representativeness. The methodological rigor, in this case, was incorporated in the conduct of the interviews and the attention to member checking and in the careful collection of observational notes. The case being studied did not aim to be "representative" in the sense of the word used by quantitative researchers—it is one window into the world of teacher beliefs. As noted by Hamel (1993), the case study "has proven to be in complete harmony with the three words that characterize any qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining."

In this study, the "case" being studied was a department of English in a typical government aided college in south India. The department and its functioning were "typical" in the sense that the class size, the student body, the resources available to the teachers and students, the organizational structure, were all common to colleges catering to the vast majority

of students in metropolitan India. The "subject" of the case study was the English language teacher in India, and the case was that of a department of English in a particular college in urban south India.

Within the case study approach, this investigation used methods such as observation and interviews as ways to access the rich data and to develop a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), both of which are tools that have been cited by case study researchers (Patton 1990; Yin, 1989) as being components of case study methodology. My aim therefore was to discover the participants' world so that a more complete understanding could be achieved. The attempt here was not to provide my interpretation of their beliefs, but rather to present the beliefs of the participants in their own words. While talking about data collection, LeCompte and Priessle (1993) made a distinction between "emic" and "etic" categories. An "etic" study is one where the "conceptual categories and explanatory relationships are created or identified by the researcher or other external observers to structure the analysis of particular populations" (p.45). The "emic" approach, however, is one where the "participants' own constructs frame the study" (p.45). Since the aim of this study was to understand the beliefs of the participants by understanding the context in which they live and work, the goal here was to develop an "emic" view. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified the case study as "the primary vehicle for emic inquiry" because it "builds on the reader's tacit knowledge" (p.359).

As mentioned in chapter two, research in the area of teacher beliefs is a relatively new phenomenon conducted primarily in developed nations. The few studies that have been undertaken in developing countries have used survey methods (Jegede, 1992). In India, most research dealing with media use in the language classroom adopted a quantitative rather than a qualitative approach; and Dewal (1997) noted that in the Indian context, in-depth qualitative

research studies were seldom conducted. The present study ventured into an area that has remained largely unexplored in the Indian context.

Research context

A criticism leveled against belief studies has been that many of them did not did take into account the contextual factors (Carter, 1990; Comeaux, 1991). To make sense of and understand the beliefs of an individual, it was essential that we situated them within the larger context. In the case of the present study, the larger context was the college where the five participants taught.

The setting for this study was a well-known Government aided college in a southern state in India. (A Government aided college is partially funded by the State Government, and in such a college, the government pays the salary of those teachers it has recruited. The college management pays teachers, who have been hired by the college. Very often there is a big discrepancy in their salary. A teacher being paid by the management sometimes makes less than half of what the Government-hired teacher makes.) The college was situated in the heart of a well-known city; it was over thirty years old and offered mainly undergraduate programs in commerce and the sciences. It also offered a few graduate level programs in the sciences. The only undergraduate program that it offered in the Humanities was a B. A. in the local language. In the early 1970s the college offered several undergraduate programs in the Humanities, including English, but they were discontinued, as they were not "money making" courses. Within the city in which the college is located, it is recognized for its science program. Although it is a private college, it is affiliated with the local university; the university awards the degrees to the students. The syllabus and the date of exams are determined by the University.

Being a relatively old college, its campus was large when compared to the new colleges that are mushrooming all over the region. Situated on seven acres of land, the college housed an auditorium, an administration building, four buildings for the sciences and one for the commerce section. Each school building had three floors and each floor had five classrooms; capable of accommodating around 60 to 80 students each. Like many old colleges in India, most classrooms had "double desks" for students to sit in, each capable of accommodating two students. The thirty desk units were divided into five rows of six. I was informed that if the number of students present in the classroom exceeded 60, then three students sat at a desk. Every classroom had two ceiling fans and four windows to keep it cool during the hot summer months. In front of the classroom was a podium for the teacher.

The college had two "shifts". It offered courses in the mornings and in the afternoons. The morning classes began at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 2:00 p.m., while the afternoon session began at 1:00 p.m. and continued till 5:00 p.m. Demographically, the college served a community with diverse socioeconomic background. The students who came ranged from middle class to the economically disadvantaged. English was seldom heard outside the classroom; the two languages that were predominantly heard were Hindi and the local language. The college is proud of its academic achievement with nearly 70% of its students passing the university exam every year. All students, no matter which undergraduate program they enrolled in have to fulfill a two-year English language requirement. Students have to pass in English, but the marks/grades that they got in their year-end exams were not taken into consideration when their overall GPA was calculated.

<u>Government vs. Private colleges</u>

When it comes to teaching, most college teachers in India prefer to work in a government college, or in a private institution which is aided by the local government. The reasons for this are many. A college funded by the government, not only offers job security, but also better pay. The teacher is assured of two months paid vacation every year; in addition, he is also entitled to eight to ten days of "casual leave" – days that he/she can absent himself from work due to personal reasons. Moreover, a government job also entitles a teacher to medical benefits and an increase in salary every year – irrespective of how well or how poorly he has performed as a teacher during the academic year. Unlike in a private institution, teachers working in a government college are seldom evaluated. Once an individual has a government job, it is very difficult to fire him, no matter how incompetent he is. Private institutions, on the other hand, are very demanding. Teachers are hired on a contract basis and many are not paid during the vacation period. These individuals can be fired at any time and have to put in more hours of work than the teacher employed by the government. The salary they get is usually half of what their counterparts in the government make; and they seldom get similar perks. No medical benefits, no increase in salary every year, and no leave travel concession – (this concession allows a federal government employee to travel, along with his family, anywhere within India every four years). Parents looking for a potential groom for their daughter prefer someone who is working for the government because they know that their son –in- law has a secure job.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

The following were key considerations in choosing participants: (1) all participants had to be from the same college (2) they had to have a minimum of three years' experience in teaching

English, (3) they had to be willing to talk about their teaching experience quite candidly, (4) they had to have the required English to express themselves, (5) they had to be willing to allow the researcher to observe their classes, and (6) the college had to have the required media that teachers could use in the language classroom. I felt it was crucial to have all the participants from the same college, as research suggested that context played a very important role in shaping the beliefs of an individual (Grossman, 1990; Johnson, 2000, Lortie, 1975). A minimum of three years' teaching experience was determined to be essential because research on novice teachers indicated that during the first two years of their career, they focused on acquiring classroom management skills rather than using innovative methods to teach (Rust, 1994).

Taking these factors into consideration, I went about looking for a college with a relatively large English department – one in which at least four of its teachers were willing to participate. Gaining access to the various colleges was not a problem. Having been a teacher educator for nearly twenty years, I either knew someone in the Department of English, or had a colleague who was in a position to put me in touch with someone. I first visited colleges that had between 12 and 15 teachers in the English department, but they all declined to take part in the study. Some teachers were willing to take part provided that I did not observe their classes. Since observation was necessary in order to determine what their actual teaching practices were, it was decided that such teachers would not be requested to be part of the study.

It was only after several disappointing weeks that I managed to find the college described in the previous section. The English department in this college consisted of eight people. I met six of them during their lunch break and explained to them the nature of my study. Of the six, five immediately volunteered to take part in the study. The one who refused had just entered the profession a few months earlier, and so in any case he would not have fit the criteria. Of the

remaining two individuals, one was on long leave and the second taught only in the afternoons and was therefore unavailable for the morning classes, which I wished to observe.

The department consisted of eight teachers; five of whom were being paid by the government and the remaining three by the Management. Of the five who volunteered to take part in the study, 4 were women. The teaching experience of these individuals ranged between 33 years and 5 years. The man had 24 years experience, while the other two women had 19 each; the government was paying four of the teachers. Three of the four experienced teachers have been teaching in the same college all their lives. As the college did not offer an undergraduate major in English, all teachers taught General English – this consisted of teaching prose, poetry, grammar and non detail (where selected texts, usually fiction, are not studied in detail. Students are expected to be familiar with the storyline of the novel or short story.) The man had a PhD in English, while two women had an M. Phil. (An M. Phil is a post M. A. degree offered by most universities in India. It is a one-year program in which a student after completing his course work writes a thesis. In India, many teachers do their M. Phil before going on to do their Ph.D.) None of the teachers had attended any teacher preparation program prior to joining the teaching profession. A few, however, had attended "Refresher Courses" (in-service programs). The oldest participant was in her mid-fifties, while the youngest was in her early thirties. Though their teaching experience varied, it should be pointed out that the participants were not in any way atypical or unusual as teachers. They were representative of the ESL teachers in India with whom I had worked for 20 years as teacher educator. The participants were what Patton (1990) would classify as "information rich" cases. As teachers, they were individuals from whom one "can learn a great deal about matters of importance" and were "worthy of in-depth study" (p 181). Here is a brief biographical sketch of the participants taking part in the study.

Radha (all names are pseudonyms)

Radha joined the teaching profession soon after completing her M. A. in English in 1983. She was given a tenure track position on being appointed and has been teaching General English in the same college for the past nineteen years. At the time of her appointment, she had had little or no experience in teaching, and had not undergone any formal teacher education programs.

As a child, Radha attended an English medium school in which both her parents were teachers. Her father taught Social Studies and her mother taught English. Like her brothers and sisters who attended the same school, Radha was never taught English in school by her mother. Being in an English medium school, Radha was expected to use the language on a regular basis during school hours, but she soon extended its use beyond the boundaries of the classroom walls. She, her brothers and sisters began to "converse in English at home" as well, and soon found that the language became an "unconscious way of talking to each other." In addition to talking to one another in English, the siblings listened to a lot of English radio programs broadcast on the "Yuva Vani" (Voice of Youth) channel of All India Radio. As a result of this constant exposure to English, she succeeded in learning the language "unconsciously."

After completing high school, Radha went on to do a B. A. in English Literature, followed by a Masters in the same subject. The medium of instruction in both these programs was English. After graduating in 1983, Radha enrolled in a teacher education program, but had to discontinue within a month as she was hired as Lecturer (Assistant Professor) by the college where she is presently working. Since then, she has attended several Refresher Courses offered by various teacher education institutes in the country, and has also successfully completed her B. Ed. She was one of two among the five teachers interviewed in this study who had planned to

join the teaching profession: "From the very beginning I loved teaching". What fascinated her about the profession was the

> ….democratic and liberal situations that you are put in, unlike in other professions, where we are all the time being prodded by somebody to do something. Here we have a kind of liberty, freedom to really express ourselves and also to make people think…. That is one very important point why I chose teaching. Nobody says do this, or do it in this way. All other persons are in their own restricted circumference and cannot come out of it to share their views or say something to others and make them think.

Nineteen years later, Radha had no misgivings about the profession she had chosen: "I have got absolutely no regret. I chose it and I love it."

Ashwini

The Head of the Department, Ashwini, was in her mid 50s and had taught English in the same college for over 33 years. Like Radha, she too went to a "convent" where the medium of instruction had been English. Unlike the others who were interviewed for this study, the teachers who taught Ashwini in the formative years of her life were all native speakers – Catholic nuns from Ireland. The girls-only school, which she attended, was very strict in adhering to the English only policy and punished all those who used the vernacular on school premises: "In my school, they used to fine the girls who talked in a language other than English." Unlike Radha, who began to experiment with her English with her brothers and sisters at home, Ashwini limited her use of the language to school. At home, she used her mother tongue with her "conservative"

parents. Though her businessman father knew English, conversations at home usually took place in the mother tongue. Outside the school domain, she had "not much" use for English.

After completing her high school, Ashwini went on to do her B. A. and M. A. in English Literature. While she was in college, she was considering joining a bank. Why a bank?

Somehow the bank job fascinated me. Maybe I had seen some bank officers at work, I don't exactly remember. But I was fascinated and I always thought I would work in a bank…..I can't really say what fascinated me. I think the bank salaries were much higher in those days.

As a result of this "fascination", Ashwini never considered other possibilities.

I had no mind to become a teacher. When I was a student, I never thought I would take up a career in teaching…. I always thought I would work in a bank. That is why I didn't think about teaching at all.

But a teacher she did become, and it was all "by chance."

After having completed your post graduation, you have to do some job or service. This job was something that I got on the platter. There was an opportunity for me to appear for an interview in this college. There was an advertisement and I very reluctantly applied. Till the date of my interview, I was not very sure that I would take up the job. I never thought when I came for the interview that I would be selected. When I was selected, I felt there was an opportunity for me to see whether I could teach. I took it up as a challenge to become a good teacher.

Ashwini was hired as Lecturer and was given the Government pay scale. Like Radha, she had had no training in teaching. During her 33 years as a teacher, she has attended many teacher

training workshops and Refresher Courses and now believes that "teaching is any day more respectable and superior" to having a job in the bank.

Suresh

Suresh, the only man to take part in this study, was in his late forties. He joined the teaching profession twenty-six years ago, and like Radha and Ashwini, he too attended a private school where the medium of instruction was English. The language was mostly used inside the classroom; in the corridors and on the playground, the students used either Hindi or the local language. At home, with his parents and his sisters, the conversation was mostly in his mother tongue – Hindi.

After completing his schooling, like his colleagues in his college, Suresh went on to do a B. A. and an M. A. in English Literature. During this phase of his life, he became a "voracious reader"; and he believes that this is what made him learn the language: "the essential prerequisite when you want to have command over any language is extensive reading". Soon after he completed his M. A., Suresh "walked out of the university" and "walked into a job" – teaching. Like Ashwini, there were "no reasons" as to why he became a teacher. His father, who was a professor of science in the local university, told him that he was "not cut out for hard work. And he said that the teaching profession was the best place for me." Since literature tickled his "intellectual palate" and since the "job market was not particularly good" in those days, he decided to follow his father's advice and became a teacher of English. Suresh applied for a tenure track positions in two colleges and after interviewing for both jobs found that he had been selected in both. He opted for this particular college because it was a five-minute walk from home.

Once he joined the profession, Suresh continued to add to his qualifications. He completed an M. Phil and a Ph. D. in English Literature and as one of the senior members in the department, he has attended several workshops and Refresher Courses run by various universities.

Janaki

In her mid forties, Janaki was the only participant in the study who had not attended an English medium school during the formative years of her life. As the daughter of a Government employee in the forest department who was frequently transferred, she found herself moving from one regional medium school to another.

> ….because my father was in the forest department, most of the time he was sent
>
> to the tribal areas. As a result, I was usually living in villages where there were no
>
> English medium schools. So I had to study in non-English medium schools.

Unlike the other participants in the study, Janaki had very little exposure to English both within and outside the school. While in school, "there was no chance" for her "to talk in English" because her "environment did not permit it." But this did not stifle her desire to learn the language: "Whenever I saw convent students who were talking in English, I always used to ask myself, 'Why can't I talk like that?'" In order to improve, she began to read "newspapers, comics, and books" and also "listen to the radio – the BBC and the Voice of America". It was only when she was in twelfth grade that Janaki finally began to speak in English. She was in a Junior College which had both English and the non-English medium sections, and though she herself was in the non-English medium section, she made friends with girls in the English section and began to converse with them in English.

After completing high school, Janaki went on to do her B. A. and M. A. in English literature, and soon after she graduated she was offered a tenure track position in a Government college. It was a girl's college situated in a small town, and she decided to take up the job because of her "love of the (teaching) profession" and her "fascination" for the English language: "I have always loved the teaching profession, especially teaching English, it has always held a fascination for me." This "love" for teaching wasn't something she acquired in college, but had been with her since childhood: "I always used to think that I have to become a teacher."

Janaki worked in the Government college for women for fourteen years, before asking for a transfer to the college where she is presently working. She has worked in this college for five years and hopes to remain there till she retires. In her nineteen years as Lecturer (Assistant Professor), she has attended several teacher education workshops and Refresher Courses, and during this time she has lost little or no enthusiasm for teaching: "I enjoy teaching; I derive a sort of pleasure from teaching."

Laxmi

The junior most member of the department and the only one who didn't have a tenured track position, Laxmi was a woman in her mid 30s. She, along with her brother, attended an English medium school where she was "not supposed to talk in" the local language. Like Radha, she began using English at home with her sibling, and whenever they made mistakes, their parents would correct them.

My parents had returned from England where my father had done his Ph. D. My

mother had worked there as well, so both of them could speak quite fluently.

Whenever my brother and I were talking at home, they always kept correcting us.

Laxmi was sometimes compelled to use English with some of her cousins who lived outside the state who did not know their mother tongue. Under such circumstances English served as the lingua franca between the various members of the family. As a child, she was constantly exposed to English; she "read quite a few books" and her father, a professor in an Engineering college, frequently took his two children to see English movies.

Once she completed high school, Laxmi went on to do her B. A. in English literature, not because she was interested in it, but because the subject that she was interested in – Fine Arts- was not offered in any of the colleges in the town where she lived. When she was doing her B. A., she was keen on becoming an "air hostess," but her mother didn't approve. Soon after graduation, she was married off. When she completed her M. A. two years later, even before she could decide what to do, she was offered a job by a language institute to teach spoken English. She worked in the place for a few months before joining a school after a friend of hers had recommended her for the job. She taught English to first and second graders for two years before she joined the present college five years ago.

<u>Role of the Researcher</u>

"A good interpretation of anything – a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society – takes us into the heart of that of which is the interpretation" (Geertz, 1973, p. 18). The stance a researcher took in conjunction with his personal biases often determined or shaped this interpretation. Patton (1990) argued that the role of a qualitative researcher towards the participants should be one of "empathic neutrality" (p. 58). "Empathy" he argued, "is a stance toward the people one encounters, while neutrality is a stance toward the findings" (p. 59). Gold (1958) observed that the stance that a researcher took towards his subjects was often determined

by his degree of involvement. He saw this degree of involvement in terms of a continuum. At one end, was the role of a complete observer, a stance that "entirely removes a field worker from the social interaction with informants" (p. 221). Although adopting such a stance allowed for the greatest objectivity, Gold warned it had its drawbacks: "a complete observer remains entirely outside the observed interaction, he faces the greatest danger of misunderstanding the observed" (p. 222). At the other end of the continuum was the researcher whose "true identity and purpose…are not known to those whom he observes" (p. 219). In the middle of the continuum was "participant observation." This role was also fraught with problems. He argued that if the researcher became overly sympathetic with the subjects then the "field worker may still go through the motions of observing, but he is only pretending" (p. 221).

For this study, I wished to take an active, though disinterested part in the processes being observed; as an observer I wished to understand the teaching practices of the participants. I was intent on "constructing shared realities" (Erlandson et al, 1993, p.47). Having been a teacher trainer for nearly twenty years, and having had ample opportunity to observe in-service teachers, I was familiar with what normally happened in the language classroom. Since the aim of the study was to understand the teachers' beliefs about teaching English, it was imperative that I made the participants feel comfortable about sharing their perceptions with me in a candid manner.

I must make clear my own bias favoring the use of popular media forms as pedagogical tools. I believe that teachers should make use of elements of the everyday environment within which students live and work. Bringing the media into the classroom is not only beneficial to the students, but also the teacher. The students learn language unconsciously, and the teacher is able to bring variety into his/her teaching. The main assumptions that underlie this study were: 1)

there is either a conscious or unconscious resistance on the part of the teachers to using media in the classroom (Chaptal, 1993; Cuban, 1995); 2) teachers have not been sufficiently trained to incorporate media into their teaching (Burke, 1994; Cuban, 2001; Schrum, 1995); 3) relatively large classes make it difficult for teachers to use the media; and 4) the school administration does not actively encourage the use of media in classrooms (Furstenberg, 1990). By acknowledging these assumptions, I also attempted to bracket them during the process of obtaining and analyzing information from the participants themselves.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) argued that in order to learn about culture,

….an interviewer doesn't necessarily need to become an insider but must be allowed to cross the boundary and become accepted as one who can be taught. To help cross these boundaries, researchers can begin studies of culture, with a period of participant observation. (p. 171)

In order to understand why teachers followed certain practices, it was imperative to know what they actually did when they were in the classroom. To determine this, I conducted a six-week study between mid September and November, 2002. I sought the permission of all five participants to sit in on their classes. Though initially reluctant, each finally agreed to let me to observe two of their classes. To ensure that my presence didn't alter their normal teaching practices, I made certain deliberate decisions. I decided that I would do classroom observations only after the participants had become used to my presence. In order to achieve this, I spent two to three hours in the staff room every day for about ten days. I talked to whoever was available about general things – where they lived, about their families and their interests, etc. Initially, making general conversation was difficult. Not only did the participants find it difficult to talk to me, but my presence also made it difficult for them to talk among themselves. The teachers were

relatively quiet; when they did talk among themselves, it was always in English and it was usually about something related to their classes--attendance, who was teaching which lesson, how many students were present in class, etc. By the fourth day, as the teachers got used to my presence, they were talking about general things – shopping, programs on television that they had watched the previous night, and college gossip. Their comfort level became more obvious when they began talking to each other in Hindi and the local language and seldom in English. Since I knew both languages, I was able to understand what they were talking about. By the time I began observing their classes, I was being included in their conversation and they began asking me general questions. While the questions that they asked initially were somewhat professional – how to teach a particular grammar rule, or to teach pronunciation- by the end of the tenth day they were questioning me about my interests, my family, and my newspaper column. During the ten days, I often repeated what I had told them in the first meeting, that their participation in the study would be both non-evaluative and non-judgmental.

Though the five participants repeatedly admitted they were nervous about having me sit in on their classes, they were extremely cooperative during the observation period. In all, I observed ten classes, two of each participant's. I made every attempt not to intrude on the daily schedule and got the teacher's permission before I sat in on his/her class. I didn't walk in on a class unannounced; the participants knew at least a day in advance that I would be observing.

From the first day of observation, I made certain conscious decisions about my physical presence in the classroom. I dressed casually. I also decided that I would sit in the back of the classroom so that I could observe not only the teacher but also the students. I usually sat alone at a desk; this allowed me to make observations without being disturbed. I was usually seated at my desk before the students entered. Another decision was to observe each participant teaching

something different. Since all the participants in the study had to teach poetry, prose, non-detail and grammar, I decided that I would observe each of them teaching any two of these. This was done to ascertain if the teaching of poetry or prose brought about a change in the teaching style of the teacher. Sometimes, a planned observation had to be cancelled because the teacher unexpectedly took the day off, or the college declared a holiday. In some cases, the students informed the teacher that they wouldn't be coming to class as their major department was conducting a seminar.

Some aspects of teaching that I focused on during my observations included the following:

1. Other than the prescribed textbook, what materials did the teacher make use of in the classroom?

2. Did the teacher make reference to any other materials explicitly?

3. Did the teacher make connections between what is taught and the students' lives?

4. What kind of methods did the teacher use? Was it mainly lecture?

5. How much interaction was there between the teacher and the students?

6. Did the students ask questions? If so, was there a prescribed routine in the classroom for asking questions?

7. Did the teacher address the students by name?

8. What did the students do during class? Take notes? Listen? Talk among themselves?

9. Did the teacher exhibit a sense of humor?

10. Where was the teacher in relation to the students? Always in the front? Did he/she move around? Did he/she stand rooted in one place?

11. How was the furniture arranged in the classroom?

The observations not only resulted in extensive field notes, but also provided the basis for the "rich description" that is required in order to recreate the participants' context of experience. Patton (1990) described field notes as the "fundamental work of the observer". He further argued that in order to be valuable, they needed to be "descriptive, concrete, and detailed." The classroom observations helped me gain some insight into the teaching practices actually followed by teachers of English, and allowed me to further refine my questions before the interviews that followed.

<center>Overview of Data Collection</center>

Data for this study were collected using both a traditional, as well as a relatively new method of data collection. In addition to the traditional method of classroom observation, which has already been discussed, the study used email as a research tool. Though many belief studies (Bird & Anderson, 1993; Grossman, 1990) relied on the long interview as the primary source of data, I decided to use email for two reasons: 1. A study, wherein data was collected through email, though not that uncommon in developed nations, had not been carried out in the Indian context. 2. Since one of the aims of the study was to determine how teacher beliefs impacted on the use of media in the language classroom, getting teachers to answer questions through email also provided some insight into how comfortable teachers were with this medium. Although there are differences between face-to-face interaction and gathering information through email, researchers have argued that it is possible to collect as much information through email as it is through the long interview. The next section highlights the similarities and differences between online discussions in asynchronous time and face-to-face discussions in synchronous time.

Email vs. the Face to face interview

The first big difference between email and a "live" discussion is that the former operates in asynchronous time. This implies that the researcher and the participant need not find a convenient time to meet and exchange information, nor do they have to be logged on to their computers at the same time in order to communicate. Participants can answer questions at a time convenient to them (Logan, 1995). One of the advantages of having an asynchronous discussion is that subjects are free to login whenever they choose to and when they do they are immediately "notified of the new postings they have not accessed" (Bush, 1996, p.2). Another advantage of asynchronicity is that since the discussions are frozen on the hard drive, the participant can either choose to answer a question immediately or after giving it some due consideration. In a face-to-face interview, participants seldom get time to reflect, their responses are more or less spontaneous (Harasim, 1986).

Another difference between asynchronous discussions and "live" interviews is that like time, "distance" is not a factor. The participants can be in any corner of the globe and as long as they have access to a computer that can be connected to the Internet, messages can be sent to and received from them at the same speed. So whether a participant is a hundred miles away or two thousand miles away, messages can be sent and received in a matter of minutes.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that physical presence of the participant and the researcher is not a requirement in an email discussion. Logan (1995) contended that in such discussions, participants "share a common corner of cyberspace rather than sit at a banquet table" (p.276). Some researchers feel that the absence of physical presence in a discussion has several advantages. Feenberg (1987), for example, argued that when exchanging information over the computer,

…users often feel they gain a more immediate access to each other's thought processes, undistracted by the status signaling and social games that are played simultaneously with speech in face-to-face encounters.... ordinary individuals possess the 'literary' capability necessary to project their personalities in written texts. The loss of the interlocutor's bodily presence does not signify impersonality, but freedom from undesirable social constraints. (p. 174)

McComb (1993) claimed that the absence of physical presence of the interviewer leads to more interaction, especially among participants who are reserved by nature. "The time for reflection and the distance of the written interaction allow the slow thinker or shy person opportunity to interact just as much as the quicker or bolder person, who can, however, still interact at his or her own pace without having to wait for permission" (p.8). McComb felt that this would lead to increased participation and therefore a greater exchange of ideas. Warshauer (1997a) called discussions carried on the computer the great equalizer; he argued that factors such as "race", "gender", "social status", and "accent" do not in anyway impact on the discussion. In addition to this, computer mediated communication eliminates non-verbal cues such as frowning and hesitation which often threaten or discourage many participants.

Although there are marked differences between face-to-face and online interviews, there is one thing that they both have in common – both make use of the spoken language. Despite the fact that email makes use of the written form, Logan (1995) pointed out that the style generally adopted in these exchanges is more oral than written. Since the messages tend to be couched in informal language, Shank (1993) compared email exchange to that of a conversation. Logan (1995) contended that,

….the protocols and rituals associated with the use of the Internet are not the formal patterns characteristic of literate communication but are more like those of an oral society, despite the underlying literate substrata that infuses the use of computers. The primary mode of communication, e-mail, is written, but, in contrast to traditional literacy, the form of writing is not formal. Grammatical structures are frequently relaxed and shorthand and jargon are liberally used. The writing is frequently infused with hieroglyphic signs used to connote feelings and tone and are meant to replicate the kind of information that facial gesture and vocal tone convey during face-to-face conversation. (p. 268).

Shank (1993) made a distinction between three types of conversational email. The first is the "monologue" where "there is only one sender and one or more receivers who listen passively to the message of the sender" (p.2). The second type of conversation is the "dialogue" where the "sender and the receiver take turns" (p.2). In this sort of conversation, the information sent by a participant is read by only by the researcher. Finally, we have a discussion where you have one sender and multiple receivers. In such a conversation "while it is important for the receivers to take turns as senders in the discussion, the initial sender still retains control of the conversation" (p.2). And perhaps what is more important about the discussion is that the information sent by one participant is read by everyone taking part in it. In this study, data were collected using the dialog form of conversation.

Email interviews

"The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990: 278). Though the author was talking about the face-to-face interview, the same

results can be achieved through computer mediated interaction as well. It has been pointed out on several occasions in the course of these four chapters, "beliefs" are not directly observable; they can be brought to the surface only by providing participants with an opportunity to talk about their experiences both within and outside of the classroom. One of the main reasons for opting for conversational email was that it was my intention to capture the beliefs of participants using their own voices.

As noted in the preceding section, Shank (1993) categorized email conversation into three types – monologue, dialog, and discussion. The data that I required to understand the beliefs of teachers could have been obtained using either the "dialog" or the "discussion". In this study I used the dialog form of email conversation for the following reasons. The five participants who took part in this study have known one another for four years or more. Having spent a considerable amount of time with one another they were very familiar with each individual's writing and speaking style. Taking part in a discussion under such circumstances would have been difficult as there would have been no anonymity. One can be candid in an online discussion when one is secure in the knowledge that one is an anonymous blur in cyberspace; that no one can put a face to your name. But in the present context even if the five teachers had used a pseudonym, the participants would probably have been able to figure out the identity. Since anonymity was lacking in the discussion form of email conversation, there was every possibility that the participants would have hesitated to say what was truly on their minds. The participant who had been hired by the college on a contract basis may have refused to say anything negative about the administration or the other teachers for the fear that her comments might somehow reach the ears of the powers that be. Since this study hoped to understand the participants' real beliefs and not their espoused ones, the dialog form of email conversation was

considered more suitable for generating the kind of data that I required. When participants take part in a "dialog" the information is shared between two individuals – the researcher and the participant who is giving the information. This was more like a private exchange between the researcher and the participant, and therefore the responses more candid.

After I had observed their classes, I again informed the participants about the nature of the study and the method by which data would be gathered. When asked if they would be willing to respond to questions through email, they agreed. The participants were requested to answer all questions candidly as the information they would provide would be kept confidential; that the name of their college and their own names would be replaced by pseudonyms.

Patton (1990) categorized interviews into three broad types: the informal conversational type, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. The informal conversational type sometimes referred to as the "unstructured format" and "in depth interviews" (Douglas, 1985; Rubin and Rubin, 1995) usually deals with a limited number of topics, sometimes as few as one or two. In the case of such an interview, the interviewee does not enter the conversation with a predetermined set of questions; he usually begins with a general question about the topic and frames the successive ones depending on what the interviewee has said. If there are several participants taking part in the study, it is entirely possible that each one will be asked a totally different set of questions. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the standardized or the "structured interview". The interviewer asks the participants a set of preplanned questions and very often the manner in which they are worded doesn't provide an opportunity for the participant to elaborate on what he/she wants to say. The advantage of such an interview is that every participant who takes part in the study will be asked the same set of questions in very much the same order. Between the two, we have the "general interview guide"

or as Merton, Fisk, and Kendall (1990) called it, a "semi-structured" interview. Here the interviewer goes in with a set of prepared open-ended questions which define the topic under investigation. The open nature of the questions allows freedom to the participant to answer them in any which way he chooses to, and at the same time, it also permits the interviewer to further probe what the participant has said. The email interviews that were done for this study were conducted much like semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions that allowed for free-wheeling answers.

The email experience

When the Institutional Review Board forms had been approved and the university authorities gave me the go ahead for my data collection, I got in touch with my participants. Before sending the first message, I gave each participant a pseudonym and then proceeded to create a folder for each individual. The first message was sent on 15 April, and the following day I received a reply from Radha: "hello upendran, so how r things that side of the fence? this ID is working so u can keep in touch. we're busy at the spot valuation." (For the final exam, the university hires senior teachers to go through answer scripts already graded by examiners. This is done to ensure that the examiners/graders follow the guidelines while evaluating. This is known as spot evaluation.) The other four participants didn't reply, and the message that I had sent to Ashwini bounced. I sent a message to my wife and requested her to find out if Ashwini's email address had changed and also if the other participants had received the message. The following day my wife informed me that Ashwini's email address had not changed, and the others had received the first message. In the days that followed, I continued to send mail; these messages enquired about their welfare and how they were spending their vacation. They also included

information about what I had been up to. The only response I got was from Suresh in which he talked about the war in Iraq, and a few poems that he sent to the New Yorker; the ladies did not respond. On 20 April, after waiting five days for a reply, I decided to email my first question – why they had decided to become teachers. In my numerous conversations with the participants during the observation period I found out how long each of them had been teaching. Using this information, I tried to ask the question in a manner which sounded personal:

> Hi Suresh, How are you? How are you holding up in the (city) heat? My wife tells me that the temperature is in the mid 40s. I hope you haven't had any power cuts. What's the water situation like? Is it as bad as last year?

> During one of our conversations we had in the staff room, you mentioned the fact that you have been teaching in this college for nearly twenty five years. That's a pretty long time. Tell me, why did you decide to become a teacher in the first place? What was it about the profession that made you say, "I want to become a teacher." Do you remember the reasons why you became a teacher? I know that I am taking you back twenty-five years in time. But hey look at the bright side. The temperatures were much cooler then!

Two days later (22 April) I got a reply from Suresh in the form of an attachment. The message read, "Hello, Here is the answer to the question." It did not contain any reference to the heat or the water situation in the city.

The replies that I received from the ladies in the course of the week followed a similar pattern. They answered the question pertaining to the study, but didn't volunteer any information about what they were doing. I tried to personalize all my messages. Since the participants had their summer break till mid June, the early messages I sent contained questions about their plans

for the break, how their children were spending their time, etc. Later, after their college had reopened, I asked questions about the new students, what they did in college that particular day, whether the textbooks had changed, etc. However hard I tried to personalize each message, the participants mostly avoided responding to them. There were a few occasions, however, when Radha and Suresh talked about general things. Here's Radha for example.

> i hope i have replied all ur ques. my husband has actually gone there to attend two conferences. reg; vacation i might go out to….my mothr's place for a short break. how is AMERICA POSTsept.? any major changes? how about chances for jobs, r people getting them? well then.

Such responses, however, were few and this made it difficult to build a personal relationship. It was not surprising that the ladies were not intent on building a good rapport with me considering the fact that I was someone that they had met for a very brief period over six months ago. In India, it is not easy to build a rapport with a member of the opposite sex even in face-to-face situations – and here I was attempting to do it through email. The fact that the participants were slowly becoming comfortable with our meetings in cyberspace was made evident by some of the personal details that they included in their answers to questions related to the study. Suresh for example, mentioned that he would occasionally "doze" in his classes, and Ashwini talked very candidly about her first class as a teacher.

The participants' initial responses to questions were short, many probe and follow up questions had to follow. During the early stages, the answers varied between ten and fifteen lines, but as the study progressed the length of messages increased. The longest answer received was from Radha; it was a two-page answer regarding the students in the college. The answers provided by Janaki and Laxmi were always short. For the most part, as the extracts in the next

chapter will show, the language that the participants used was informal. The sentences were short, at times incomplete, and the vocabulary was simple.

The interview guide (see appendix A) determined the email conversation to a large extent, with enough flexibility to explore themes not been explicitly listed in the questions. The preplanned questions helped to keep the dialog focused, purposeful, and participatory. The conversation followed a semi-structured format (Rubin and Rubin, 1985) beginning with general "setting at ease" questions and moving on to questions that required more considered or detailed responses. The open-ended questions, because they required a considerable amount of reflection on the part of the participants, were sent one at a time. If all the questions had been included in a single message, it may very well have overwhelmed the participants. They may have decided not to participate in the study. The "follow up" and "probe" questions were determined by the answers given by the participant and differed according to the content of their answers. Each "dialog" informed the next, and the conversations became more and more specific as they built on information gathered in the previous dialog.

Between May and the early part of June, the participants replied to questions in matter of few days, but as the study entered its third month, it was difficult get quick responses from them. Janaki, for example, didn't answer any of the follow up questions related to media, and a few others kept their answers very short and hinted at the amount of "typing" involved in answering questions. When the college reopened in the third week of June, answers to follow up questions slowly began to dry up. Since I had got the answers to the main questions, I decided to put an end to data collection. It came to an end three months after it began, but I continued to be in touch with Suresh for the purpose of member checking.

Like any other method of data collection, gathering data through email has several advantages and disadvantages. During my three-month experience I found that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages. The two advantages that I saw were: 1. No transcription work for the researcher. This was a boon; I didn't have to spend hours trying to decipher what was on a tape, and 2. Crisp answers: Since the participants had time to reflect, the answers they provided were short and to the point. What they managed to say in fifteen lines may have run into two or three pages if they had been allowed to talk.

The disadvantages however were: 1. Building rapport: it was extremely difficult to build rapport in cyberspace. If I hadn't been familiar with the participants, I would have had enormous problems collecting the data needed for the study. The fact that the ladies seldom took the trouble to answer friendly and general questions unrelated to the study is perhaps an indication that this type of data collection may not be possible among all cultures. Since there was no real rapport with the participants, I always felt that I was imposing myself on them whenever I asked for clarifications or posed new questions. This made me feel very uncomfortable. Collecting data through email should be the choice of individuals who do not depend on body language to sense the feelings or emotions of interviewees; 2. Typing: gathering data through email involves a lot of work for the participants; it means that they have to type their answers. Problems arise, when the participants are not well versed in typing. They may become frustrated by the amount of time it takes to type in an answer to a question. Janaki had problems typing; as a result she usually kept her answers short. But because there were so many gaps in her answers, I ended up asking many more probe and follow up questions; 3. Waiting for replies: since the participants had the freedom to answer questions as and when they pleased, I sometimes had to wait weeks in order to get a reply. For example, I didn't hear from Laxmi for two weeks during her summer break

because she was in a place where she didn't have access to a computer. She didn't inform me of this, and the wait was nerve wracking. As an interviewer I could never figure out just how long I had to wait before sending a gentle reminder to an erring participant. Collecting data by email, in my opinion, should be done by someone who has tremendous confidence in himself, or by someone who is not afraid of being aggressive. Those that are diffident will have problems. Such individuals, if they wish to collect data through email, should make use of respondents whom they know very well, or don't know at all. One can afford to be aggressive in such cases. With acquaintances, it is difficult to know where to draw the line.

<div align="center">Ethical considerations</div>

Schrum (1995) argued that researchers who make use of online communication must "be careful to protect the rights of individuals who post electronic messages and that ethical standards must be zealously guarded" (p.312). The advantage of gathering data through email, as has been pointed out, is that there is no need to transcribe; the data comes to you in the form of a transcript. Since the participant also has a copy of the transcript it becomes easy to go back to some of the things that he/she has said and clarify. While there are certain advantages in gathering information through email, one of the problems is ensuring confidentiality. Email messages come with the sender's name and address and whoever has access to your computer can, if he/she wants, find out who the participants in a particular study are. To ensure that none of the messages could be traced back to any of the participants I took certain precautions. Each of the participants was given a pseudonym and their responses saved in separate folders. Once the email message was converted into a word document, the original message was deleted. The participant's email address, and his/her name did not appear anywhere in the stored documents.

The converted files were saved on floppies, and as a precautionary measure, back-ups were made and stored on movable media (disks) and also on a second hard disk.

I also made deliberate decisions regarding how I would react to certain situations were they to occur in the classroom during the observation period. The first involved the content of what the teacher said in the course of his/her lecture. If the teacher provided the students with erroneous information, what was I to do? I decided that I would inform the teacher of the mistake. My question was whether I should inform him/her during or after class. I decided that if a major mistake did occur, I would privately inform the participant of it after, and not during class. I made this decision for three reasons. First, while informing the five participants about the nature of the study, I had repeatedly assured them that the focus of the observations would be on their teaching practices, and not on their English. If I were to correct their mistake in class, I would have been going back on my word. As a result, they would have lost their trust in me, and this infringement on my part could have resulted in their withdrawing from the study altogether. Second, by pointing out the error in the presence of the students, I would have been undermining the authority of the teacher. Finally, by commenting on the error, I would have been drawing attention to myself. During the observation period, my intent was to be the silent observer; I was to be as unobtrusive as possible, so that the participants and students behaved in their normal fashion. By drawing attention to myself, I would have not only changed the behavior of the participants, but also that of the students. The students would have become aware of my presence and this may have lead to their change in behavior. For these reasons I decided that I would inform the teacher of any error, after, and not during class.

The second decision I made was regarding the students. If during the observation period I found students performing certain illegal activities what should I do? For example, if a student

was seen copying during a test, what should be my response? I decided that since the marks that the students got in tests were not counted in the final exam, I would not tell on them immediately. Instead, I would observe the techniques that they used for copying. After class, I would ask the teacher about the problems of cheating among students and whether he/she noticed any cheating going on during the test. If the participant had noticed, then we would exchange notes as to which students were involved in the cheating process and what techniques they used to cheat.

Luckily I didn't have to worry about these two things: the participants did not make a major error that needed to be corrected, and they did not quiz the students on any of the lessons.

The use of email and classroom observations were the two sources of data for this study and helped provide the "thick description" that Geertz (1973) believed was essential when documenting human constructions of reality. Multiple sources of data are one of the characteristics of a case study (Yin, 1989) and they also provided for "triangulation" (Denzin, 1989). According to Marshall and Rossman (1995) "triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point" (p. 144). Data from the various sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research question (Rossman and Wilson, 1985). In the case of the present study, triangulation was provided by the data collected from the classroom observations and those obtained from the interviews.

Reciprocity

Glesne (1999) and Marshall and Rossman (1995) argued that one of the problems that qualitative researchers confronted was reciprocity.

As research participants willingly open up their lives to researchers - giving time,

sharing intimate stories, and frequently including them in both public and private

events and activities - researchers become ambivalent, alternatively overjoyed

with the data they are gathering, but worried by their perceived inability to

adequately reciprocate. (Glesne, p. 126)

During the first meeting with the teachers I asked them what they would like in return for their

participation. Their request was that I should give a talk to the students on the importance of

English in getting a job. I readily agreed.

Data analysis

Most qualitative studies are emergent in nature. Miles & Huberman (1994) suggested that

where the aim of the research is "identification and categorization of elements and exploration of

their connections," constant comparison analysis, a method originally described by Glaser and

Strauss (1967, p. 58), is particularly applicable. Adopting such a method implies that data

analysis will begin from day one of the study. The qualitative researcher operates under the

assumption that all the stages of the research process--data collection, analysis and

interpretation--are fluid and overlapping. This assumption is explicitly recognized and in a sense

systematically incorporated into the building of grounded theory using constant comparison. The

researcher goes into the field with only broad questions of the "what's going on here?" variety,

starting with observations that are coded and arranged in descriptive categories and then used as

the basis for more abstract analysis. The broad question, in this study, might be framed as,

"What's going on here in terms of media use?" The goal is to achieve an understanding of the

teaching context as it applies to media use.

The interviews, from the day they began, were filed, analyzed and coded (in terms of content), resulting in the generation of (largely descriptive) categories. The emergent categories or themes helped me make sense of the data. Ely (1991) saw this process as being an intimate conversation between the researcher and his data, which resulted in the construction of an appropriate conceptual scheme. In order to ensure that my interpretations (the conceptual scheme) remained as close to the participants' actual lived experiences, I designated one of the participants as a key informant and crosschecked my emerging ideas with him. This also ensured that the emic perspective was maintained and described as faithfully as possible. This process wherein the researcher asks the participant to evaluate the data, analysis, interpretation, and conclusion is called "member checking" (Seale, 1999). Member checking and triangulation are often used in qualitative research to enhance the credibility of a study.

The field research yielded two broad kinds of information: descriptive information about classrooms, teaching conditions and resources; and perceptions and experiences in the forms of anecdotes and narratives. The analytical process produced an account that provided an understanding of the teacher (using his or her own voice as much as possible) and a picture of the context. The questions, "What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India?" and "How do these beliefs impact on media use in the language classroom?" are answered in the subsequent chapters in the form of narratives and anecdotes from teachers, into which are woven the thick descriptive information from my observations.

Bogdan and Bilkin (1992) summarized some of the key points of the constant comparative method for analysis in the following manner:

1. Begin collecting data.

2. Look for issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.

3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus.

4. Write about the categories, attempting to describe and account for the incidents that are in the data, whole looking for new incidents.

5. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories (p. 74).

Procedure

Since the purpose of any analysis is to make "sense of the data" (Merriam, 1998), I poured over it several times in order to find recurring patterns. The first important step in the process of analysis was to code the data. "Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.56). As I sifted through the data, I began to look for key words, phrases, or issues that recurred frequently; and when I found one, I highlighted the word/phrase and gave it a descriptive term. Some of the descriptive terms used were "training", "communication", "frustration", "discipline", etc. and these gave rise to the first set of "categories." The following extract shows how coding was done.

> Radha: The students just *get by heart the text* and then *reproduce* it in the exam, and once your English is good you are supposed to get good marks. This **makes me feel very sad** because the purpose of learning the English language is *not to get by heart a piece or summary*; the stress should be more on how to communicate. But then **we don't teach the communication skills**. I mean there is **no chance to teach them communication skills**.

Tentative categories: memorization/rote learning (italics), sadness/frustration (bold), communication (underlined)

As I went through Radha's transcripts, I realized that "communication" was a recurrent topic. The data showed that she was using the words "talking" and "speaking" to mean "communication." It began to be used as a key word and soon evolved into the theme of "language learning is communication." This theme was further subdivided into smaller categories. One category was communication within the classroom, and this was something Radha repeatedly talked about.

1. "Language should be practiced through talking." (Radha, p. 4)

2. "I always tell them that language can be learnt only through speech." (Radha, p. 5)

This theme that language is communication was identified as one of Radha's beliefs. This became a part of the answer to the first research question of the study. Here's an example of how the quotes were organized.

Research Q I: What are ESL teachers beliefs about teaching English in India?

(Code) Learning is communication

(Quote and page #): 1. "Language should be practiced through talking." (Radha, p. 4)

2. "I always tell them that language can be learnt only through speech." (Radha, p. 5)

This procedure was followed to uncover the beliefs of all the participants. Once the data for one participant was completed, the cross-case analysis was begun to assist me in understanding if all participants shared similar beliefs or not.

Summary

This chapter presented a description of the study design and the methods used to collect and analyze the data. After a brief review of the various methods used earlier by researchers to understand teachers' beliefs, it provided reasons why the present study adopted a case study approach. The chapter also gave a detailed description of the college in which the study was conducted, and a brief sketch of each of the study's participants. Pointing out the similarities and differences between email and face-to-face interviews, the chapter made a case for the use of email as the primary source of data collection. It went on to discuss how the data were analyzed and detailed the researcher's biases, which were taken into account during the analyses. The research design and the methods used to collect and analyze the data helped to answer the following two main questions: 1. What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India?, and, 2. How do these beliefs impact on media use in the language classroom?

CHAPTER 5

TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the participants' beliefs about teaching English in India, without extensive interpretation or analysis. The focus is on describing the beliefs in the participants' own words and, as such, attempts to provide an answer to research question 1: What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India? The beliefs that emerged upon analysis of the data were often complex, and at times conflicting. The participants disagreed among themselves about certain beliefs, and it was not uncommon for a participant to often contradict a stated belief. For example, Ashwini pointed out although she believed that a teacher enjoyed an elevated status in India, she would not recommend the profession to anyone. The following chapter attempts to provide an interpretation of the beliefs and to explain the apparent conflicts and contradictions in the beliefs described in this chapter.

Role of apprenticeship of observation

The literature review in Chapter 2 suggests that much of what a teacher does in the classroom is often determined by the manner in which he/she was taught; in other words, an individual's teaching practices are often shaped by the images and ideas that he brings with him when he enters the teaching profession. Lortie (1975) referred to this as "apprenticeship of observation" and researchers like Johnson (1995) and Richards (1996) argued that these beliefs about teaching that one forms very early in one's life cannot be erased or even altered by pre-

service teaching training programs. Our prior experiences as students often act as "filters" (Nespor, 1986) for our subsequent experiences as teachers.

Given the fact that past experience shapes an individual's teaching practices, one of the aims of the interviews in this study was to ask the participants to identify their favorite teacher, and provide reasons why this individual had impressed them so much. In addition, the participants were also questioned about the teaching practices adopted by this teacher. These questions were considered particularly important, as none of the five participants had undergone any teacher training when they joined the profession. There was, therefore, a strong possibility that their teaching practices were modeled on those of their teachers. Furthermore, a comparison of the old (their teacher's) practices with their own currently adopted practices (based on the classroom observations), might also indicate if and in what ways their practices had changed.

Ashwini, Radha, and Suresh recalled that their greatest influence had been a teacher from college. Laxmi observed that it was her father, and an elementary school teacher who played a pivotal role in molding her teaching practices. Janaki was influenced by a man who had never taught her, a neighbor who tutored students weak in English.

Radha explained that she gravitated to the teaching profession because it offered her not only the independence that she was looking for in a job, but also provided her with ample opportunities to "make people think." In sharp contrast to this, she saw people in other professions as being caught in their "restricted circumference" and being unable to "come out of it to share their views." When asked where she got these beliefs about teaching, she replied that it was by watching her teachers both at school and college. But the teacher who influenced her most was one who had taught her at the undergraduate level.

> I think the teacher who influenced me a lot was Achala (pseudonym), who taught me literature at my B.A. level when I studied in….. She was my teacher there, and every poem or every piece of writing she taught, she used to relate it to life and then discuss it with us.

By linking the text to the "present reality", Achala made students "think" and "search for solutions" for problems confronting students.

When Radha became a teacher of English, she pondered about how to teach the language. She adopted the methods used by her teacher, Achala. But during the early stages of her career, Radha had a problem.

> From the very beginning of my profession, when I joined first, I was thinking what would be the best way to make a class more interesting. So I used to talk about quite many things that were not related to the particular piece of literature as such.

But now, she is able to relate the prescribed text to real life. She observed that if it hadn't been for Achala, she "would not have gone about teaching English in this kind of a mode." She is adamant, however, that she is not imitating any of her teachers, not even Achala. "Actually nobody determines our style. That is one important reason that I chose teaching. Nobody says do this, or do it in this way. You have your own way of evolving things."

Suresh, like Radha, tries to link literature to life, but his beliefs about teaching were influenced by a professor who taught him at the postgraduate level. Unlike Radha, none of his schoolteachers made an impact on him. Suresh maintains that he "found Dilip (pseudonym) the most interesting because he would crack jokes and make the lectures interesting. He would tell us about his personal experiences and he would move to other texts. Cross referring and moving

forward and backward." Suresh, as mentioned earlier, joined the teaching profession because his father thought that he wouldn't be able to cope with the "hard work" that the other professions demanded. As a novice, he believed that teaching would be a "piece of cake. I thought that teaching basically involved reiterating the text, that there was no way in which you can move out of the text or go on to any other books for any respectable length of time." Though Dilip was his favorite teacher, Suresh decided not to adopt his practices. Instead, he made use of the practices used by his schoolteachers. As a result, teaching for Suresh became "a transfer of body of knowledge to the students. It is like giving a transfusion of blood." In his early days in the profession, his method consisted of reading aloud the text and explicating.

> I would read the paragraph and explicate the lines. I would read out the pilot sentences at the beginning and end and I would tell them that the key to a paragraph is the first sentence generally…. I would tell them to go through the first line and then the middle lines and then the last lines. We would go through this fast because we wanted to do a quick reading. But in those days we had an unwieldy strength, so the whole thing was a nightmare.

It was the huge class size that prevented Suresh from adopting Dilip's techniques. Although Suresh still believes that the "relationship between the teachers and the students is primarily one of the giver and taker," experience has taught him that this "transfusion" of knowledge can take place even if he adopts the techniques of his favorite professor.

> First, we cover the text territory and then keeping in mind their (students') level and their average levels of competence we do the exercises. Apart from that we move out into other territories or dimensions or zones…You make the lectures more interesting by moving out. It may take a little more time than if you stick to

the prescribed text…. We inject some life into it (the class) by bringing in extra-territorial things.

Like the professor who kept the class in good spirits by cracking many jokes, Suresh now believes one of the jobs of a good teacher is to entertain.

A good teacher has to teach and he has to entertain – that is my feeling. And when you entertain them (the students), they laugh and through laughter you kick start their interest in listening…. He (the teacher) should be serious, humorous, at times he can afford to be flippant….he uses cross referencing, anecdotes, humor, body language and innovative areas of discourse. He weaves in and out of the text like a skillful motorist negotiating the rush hour. He is a glue between the seemingly unconnected.

Suresh is the only participant who sees the potential of humor in teaching; the only one who subscribes to the notion of the teacher as an "infotainer". And unlike the other four participants who maintained that their teaching methods were not modeled on any of their teachers, Suresh admitted that he tried to follow his "mentors."

The head of the department, Ashwini, was influenced by Deepa who taught her poetry for one year when she was a junior in a girls' college. What appealed to Ashwini about this particular teacher was that she was one of the few who taught literature with any emotion.

There was nothing demonstrative about her (Deepa), and if I remember well (correctly), she never lectured standing. She always used to sit comfortably in the chair and move the objects on the table. But the way she used to read each line, we could see the expressions on her face. That was a very important thing for us; or maybe because girls are more emotional, we could read between the lines.

And when Deepa taught "emotional" poems like "Highwayman" and "Lochinvar", she succeeded in moving students like Ashwini. Deepa's teaching style influenced Ashwini so much, that when she was hired in a boy's college as a teacher, she decided that for her first class that she would teach poetry just like her mentor. She chose to teach poetry because she felt that "impress" her students much more than a prose lesson. Ashwini desired to teach the poem (Rossette Remembered) in a manner that "really appealed to their hearts", but unfortunately she had to abandon this style of teaching because she found that the boys, who were nearly as old as she was, were unable to "read between the lines" and "respond to emotions." Instead, she merely "read the poem, told them briefly about it, paused at every line and tried to explain what the poet meant. No interpretations about the poem were made; the students were given a summary of what the poet was trying to say." But now, after teaching for over three decades, she no longer worries about the students' reaction; she brings in a lot of emotion. She teaches poetry "the way poetry is to be taught. Not the shallow way."

Unlike the other participants discussed so far, Laxmi mentioned two people who influenced her greatly during the early stages of her career. The earliest influence was her father, a professor in an engineering college. As a young girl, she found that whenever students came home, her father

> …always made his students talk to him and interact with him…. Somehow he made his students talk to him more; he always kept telling me that you should somehow make the students feel so comfortable that they are able to talk to you and vice versa.

The second teacher that influenced Laxmi was Sujatha (pseudonym), a teacher in school whose philosophy was similar to that of her father's.

Her name was Sujatha; she was an Anglo Indian. She was a very good teacher.

Apart from teaching, she would be very friendly with us, both inside and outside

the classroom. We were more close to her than any other teacher.

When Sujatha taught in class, she attempted to provide opportunities for students to talk. Since her intent was getting students to talk, very often she completed her lessons very "fast." She would then "narrate a story" and would then expect the students "to tell a story" of their own. Being fond of the teacher, the students never felt odd standing in front of the class and telling a story. The "friendliness" which Sujatha exuded succeeded in creating an atmosphere conducive to talking:

> She created an atmosphere where we never felt that it was odd to go and talk in
>
> front of the class. We always wanted to go and tell a story. We were not bothered
>
> about whether the language we used was good or bad. We made a lot of mistakes,
>
> but ordinary mistakes she never corrected; only when she thought we were
>
> making major blunders.

The two teachers who made the greatest impact on Laxmi believed that it is the teacher's job to get the students talking. So when Laxmi became a primary school teacher, getting students to talk became one of her primary concerns.

> I would be like a friend to them and ask them things like "What did you have to
>
> eat today?" or "What do you do after you go back home from school?" I would
>
> never ask them about the contents of the lesson, grammar or the syllabus. I would
>
> just talk to them and they would talk to me Telugu. I would then insist on (their)
>
> talking in English and they would slowly start talking one or two sentences in
>
> English. Once they opened themselves up to me I came to know where they were

going wrong and their point (areas) of weakness. I was therefore definitely able to

correct them.

Although the methods she seems to have adopted are similar to those of Sujatha's, Laxmi, like

Ashwini and Radha, believes that she hasn't "adopted" or copied anyone's particular style. She

believes that she is "forming" her "own method" of teaching.

The teacher who most impressed Janaki, the final participant in the study, was her

neighbor. He was a teacher of English who did some tutoring on the side; and as a child, Janaki

"would go and listen" to him because she liked "the way he was expressing himself." The

manner in which he "explained" things left her so impressed, that "from then on, the idea entered

my mind that I have to become like him." When asked what she found impressive about the

neighbor, Janaki replied that the experience took place such a long time ago that she no longer

remembered. But he was the individual who created the urge in her to become a teacher of

English. Since she was unable to recall what her neighbor's teaching practices were, she said that

the teaching practices that she used in her classroom were essentially her "own style."

In summary, four of the participants described here believe that their teaching practices

are their own. In chapter six we will see if and how their various experiences as students shaped

and determined their beliefs and teaching practices. In other words, the final chapter will attempt

to determine what role was played by the "apprenticeship of observation" in shaping the beliefs

and practices of the five participants.

Beliefs about the "status" of a teacher

Another theme that the participants touched on is the profession of teaching in India: the

"status" of a teacher in general, and how the teacher of English in particular is viewed within the

college framework. The beliefs are varied; some, very positive and some, very negative Radha believes that in the Indian context, teachers are placed on the "highest pedestal." Having taught English for nineteen years, and being the only participant to have observed teachers in another country (New Zealand), she concluded:

> A teacher's place in India is definitely at the highest pedestal. My experience has been in New Zealand where teachers are not given any respect at all, even by a small five year old or a six year old. But here, the kind of relationship we teachers enjoy is different. You are respected – whether you are an English teacher or a Science teacher or a Maths teacher- a teacher is a teacher.

Radha believes that it is because of the "respect" that an individual gets that people often turn to teaching, and this often leads to frustration.

> Very few lecturers join colleges because they love the profession. I find that there is always a regret in the case of most teachers. Many feel that they would have been better off in some other profession….If you are joining the profession because you think it's a status symbol, then you shouldn't join. Teaching cannot be a status symbol.

> Ashwini, who during her student days was keen on joining a bank, now believes that "professionally…. teaching is any time more respectable and superior" to being in a bank. When she walks into the classroom and lectures, the students are not only listening to a person who is "elder" to them, but also one who is "superior to them." She is in this "superior position" not because she necessarily knows more than her students, but because of the "Guru-sishya relationship" – teacher-student relationship. As long as the teacher remained "on the dais, he is the guru" and therefore should be respected.

Ashwini initially endorsed Radha's view that both society and students respected all teachers, no matter what they taught. She argued, "…as persons, we (English teachers) also have the same respect that they (the students) give to the other teachers. That is definite; there are no two ways about it." But later this perception of how students viewed her and her colleagues who teach languages changed dramatically when she pronounced English teachers and all language teachers to be "second class citizens." She contended that since the marks that students get in their language papers do not affect their overall G.P.A,

> ….they don't run after us like they do the optional (science and commerce) teachers because they don't need us. All languages are facing the same problems. Some of them (teachers) won't tell you because it reflects on them as teachers. But I don't care. This is the plight of all language teachers….Optionals are first class citizens, and language teachers are second class citizens.

While in the eyes of her students she may be a "second class citizen", Ashwini herself believes that within the teaching community, an English teacher is on a higher pedestal than those teaching subjects like physics, chemistry, and accounts because

> …to become an English teacher, or to continue to remain to be an English teacher is not a cakewalk. The other lecturers just have to be thorough in their subject matter; their English is not taken into consideration. When they lecture, the focus is on content and not on the correctness of language. For an English teacher, on the other hand, things are very different. You not only have to know the content, but every sentence that you speak has to be grammatically right.

Although she believes that teachers are highly respected, Ashwini said that if someone asked her if he/she should join the teaching profession, then she would "definitely discourage" the

individual. Her argument is that since the Government has "frozen all recruitments" teaching is no longer a well-paid profession. The colleges that are willing to hire an individual on a contract basis pay only "five thousand rupees" a month; and according to Ashwini "you cannot sustain yourself" on that salary.

Suresh and Laxmi also harped on the theme of language teachers being viewed differently by students. Suresh, who argued that teaching is "as good as any other form of making a living", maintained that most students "don't take the subject (English) seriously." But this problem is not limited to English alone, according to Suresh most students "are not bothered about the second language." Very often, this indifference towards the subject is often reflected in their blasé attitude towards the teachers who teach the languages as well. Suresh contends that teachers of English are not "sought after" as teachers of physics, chemistry and accounts are. Students only seek out an English teacher "once in donkey's years" to clear their doubts. When they run into their teacher of English outside the classroom, the normal reaction of students is to "look through you, ignore you or they turn their heads away when they see you. They don't even bother to greet you."

While the word "respect" is never used by Suresh to explain how teachers are perceived by students, Laxmi uses it repeatedly to explain the relationship: "when they see that we are from the English department they all respect us", and "when they know that he/she is an English lecturer, they definitely respect us." She, like Ashwini and Suresh, argues that language teachers are perceived differently from "subject teachers." When it comes to "respect" the language teacher doesn't get the same as the "subject teacher", but within the language teaching community there is a hierarchy. The teacher of English is given much more importance than the other language teachers. "Relatively speaking, I think a teacher who is teaching subjects like

physics and accounts is given more respect. But at the same time when compared to the other languages, they (students) definitely give us (English teachers) much more respect."

The views expressed by the participants regarding the "status" of a teacher of English are very different. At one end of the continuum, we have Ashwini who believes that English teachers are superior to teachers who teach other subjects and languages; this is in sharp contrast to Suresh's beliefs that language teachers, including those who teach English, are at the bottom of the totem pole. How these beliefs about a teacher play out in the classroom will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

<u>Beliefs about discipline</u>

One of the recurring themes that all participants talked about in some detail was the importance of maintaining discipline in the classroom: "I want discipline", said Janaki, "I don't tolerate any indiscipline**.**" "Maintaining discipline in class is very important," argued Radha. "Discipline is a part and parcel of maintaining the class. The teacher has to be strict…the students have to be kept under control." The idea of the teacher being in "control" is echoed by Laxmi as well when she contended that the teacher must be "in a state of control" so that (s)he can "put (keep) the other party (students) under control." Discipline is "very, very important" for a teacher like Janaki because it helped her to "concentrate on the lecture." Lack of discipline often lead to physical or mental discomfort for the teacher. Suresh, the only participant in the study to have admitted that he had problems of "managing the class" during the early stages of his career, stated that indiscipline led to students

….asking stupid questions, trying to pull the leg of the teacher. It was not a very

happy state of affairs. It disturbed me and derailed my mental process and I found

myself tripping up, and making mistakes. I was constantly hyper-ventilating.

When Radha feels that there is no "discipline" and the "whole class is not under" her control, she

gets jittery. She stated, "You feel that you are wasting your time and you are wasting their

time."

To these five participants for whom "discipline" is very important, the "ideal classroom"

is one where students remained "silent." "I always want my students to be silent in class when I

am teaching," said Janaki. Laxmi echoed this sentiment as well:

….there should be an atmosphere where she (the teacher) can teach, and the

students should listen. I don't want students to talk in the class when I am

teaching. If there is communication going on between students or from outside, I

am not for it because it ultimately disturbs my concentration.

For Suresh, an ideal classroom is one where the students "pay attention." It is one in which "You

do your duty and you do your talking. You question, they reply; they take their turn giving

intelligible answers." For Ashwini, "paying attention" is only one of the things that she expects

from her well disciplined students in the classroom. She, like Radha, expects them to show her

the "minimum courtesy" by greeting her when she walks into the classroom and thanking her

when she takes leave. She doesn't "tolerate giggling and grinning for no reason" and doesn't

allow students to put their feet up on the desk, or chew gum.

Although the participants have similar views regarding the role of discipline in the

language classroom, the methods they adopt to maintain control over their students are very

different. The most experienced teacher, Ashwini, for example, claimed that she kept her

students under control by posing a lot of questions about the lesson. "I ask them questions. That is the only way to set them (the students) right." The others adopt extreme measures to maintain discipline in class – three of them (Janaki, Laxmi, Radha) inform their students that they are free to leave if they are not interested in the lesson, and the fourth (Suresh) has an implicit understanding with the students that they will be given attendance even if they walk in at the very end of the class. Janaki, for example, said:

> I always want my students to be silent and responsive to what I teach in the class.
> I want discipline; I don't tolerate indiscipline…..Before I start teaching them, I
> tell them that if they are not interested, they can leave. But as long as they are in
> class, they should not disturb.

Laxmi is another teacher who tells her students that they are free to walk out of the classroom should they choose to.

> The student who doesn't want to depend on what the teacher says is not welcome
> in class because he can pass the exams anyway with the help of guides (notes)….I
> tell them (the students) that I am not forcing them to stay in the class and they can
> go out if they want to and do their other work. I do not force them to sit in class.

For Radha, discipline is so important, that she is not only willing to let students go, but is also willing to "take" special classes for them when they are in the mood to learn.

> There might be one or two fellows who just don't want to listen in the class. The
> best thing is to do is to let them go. Tell them that they can leave the class and
> whenever they are interested they can come to you and you will explain it (the
> lesson) to them. By doing this, you will have your class under control. Discipline

is very important; the teacher has to be strict. When I teach, I don't expect to hear any noise. We have to keep the students under control.

Since discipline is very important, it is not surprising that teachers like Laxmi and Radha often send away students who come to class "ten minutes after the bell." Such students are a source of distraction not only for the teacher, but also for the other students in class. While Laxmi and Radha maintain discipline by asking those students who are not interested to leave the classroom, Suresh seems to encourage uninterested students to walk in as late as possible. And because he doesn't turn away students and is willing to give attendance to those who walk in very late, many choose to make an appearance at the end of the hour. This however, doesn't seem to disappoint Suresh.

> When the lecture begins, there are five or ten (students). Then they trickle in; slowly it turns into a flood at the end for the attendance. It goes up to 45 or so at the end. It becomes a menagerie towards the end; it becomes the human zoo. …. I am very comfortable with the thin attendance at the beginning of the lecture because only those who are interested will attend class.

When asked who these students were who walked in so late, he said that they were "the stragglers, the gate crashers and the never do wells, and the skirt chasers." Like the other participants in the study, discipline is of paramount concern for Suresh, and discipline seems to be tantamount to silence. This is best reflected by the following statement made by him: "They (the students) should listen, or they should sleep quietly, head slumped on the desktop or they should not enter the class."

The participants have very similar beliefs about discipline; it is imperative for the teacher to have "control" over the class, students should "listen" and answer questions asked by the

teacher. How this belief about discipline translates into classroom practices and what impact it has on the use or non-use of the media will be discussed in the next chapter.

<u>Beliefs about language learning</u>

The literature on belief studies suggests that an individual's beliefs about language learning are often influenced by his/her own experiences as a learner both within and outside the classroom. The section, which provided the biographical sketch of the five participants, revealed that three (Suresh, Janaki, and Ashwini) of them had learned most of their English in the classroom. Although the medium of instruction for four participants had been English, it was only two among them, namely Radha and Laxmi, who believed that their activities outside the classroom had played a significant role in their learning of English. They had argued that they had been successful in learning English because they had been constantly exposed to the language at home and school. The other two participants, Suresh and Ashwini, who had been schooled in English convents as well, had confined their use of English to the school context. It remains to be seen if these differences in the manner in which they learned English, will be reflected in their beliefs about how their students should learn English.

Janaki, the only participant who never attended an English medium school, argued that the best way to learn any language is to have "exposure" to it – something which she herself was starved of as a student as she moved from one regional medium school to another. "One should have the exposure. If you have exposure, then you don't have to put in much effort to learn the language. It (learning) will take place automatically." As a student, Janaki had limited exposure to English; in order to do well in the school exams she needed to acquire two skills, namely, reading and writing. It is not surprising therefore that as a teacher Janaki places a premium on

these two skills. Of the four skills, Janaki never made a single reference to "speaking." She gives some amount of importance to listening, but her focus is always on reading and writing. When asked to compare the relative importance of "listening" and "reading", she said, "reading is more important. To an extent listening will help (in learning a language), but reading plays a much more important role." While reading is more important than listening, Janaki maintained that the most important skill that a student must acquire is writing. She argued that this is the most valuable skill "because they (the students) have to give examinations where they have to write essays and compositions." In Janaki's case, it seems reasonable to conclude that the manner in which she learned the language seems to have deeply influenced her perceptions of how her own students must learn it.

While Janaki does not lay too much emphasis on listening, Suresh believes it is this skill that needs to be developed in order to learn any language. "The best way of learning a language is to internalize what you have taken in, keeping your ears close to the ground, picking up the speech patterns and the grammar rules without knowing what they are." According to Suresh the students can "pick up the language nuances and patterns" by "listening" to the teacher. But unlike Janaki, he maintained that in order to acquire a language, two other skills are required as well. "If one wants to have a real command over the language, one has to listen, one has to read and one has to write." When asked how he himself succeeded in learning English, he replied, "by voracious reading. The essential prerequisite when you want to have a command over any language is extensive reading. They (the students) have to go beyond the textbook." The extensive reading, which Suresh alludes to, was the experience he had outside the classroom; it was not something which took place within the confines of the classroom. While he himself learned English through "voracious reading" and going beyond the textbook, Suresh wants his

students to focus on listening. There is a contradiction here; he is recommending the honing of a skill which he himself had to develop as a student. Suresh seems to be more influenced by his learning experience in the classroom than the learning experience that he had outside the four walls of the classroom – the experience which he believes eventually enabled him have a "real command" of the English language.

Radha, Ashwini, and Laxmi, unlike Suresh and Janaki, strongly contended that speaking is the most important skill to be acquired by language learners. A theme that the three participants discussed in some detail was that learning English implies knowing how to communicate in the language. Presently, the focus of most teachers, they argue, is too much on completing the syllabus, and not on improving students' communication skills. Ashwini complained that she is "bored teaching the same thing over and over again every year" and that she would like to move on to something a little more important. She would like to teach the students "how to talk and how to communicate." This view is strongly endorsed by the other two participants as well. Radha said:

> ….we teach only literature. We don't teach them language, we don't teach them
>
> communication skills….The stress should be more on how to communicate. But
>
> then, we don't teach them communication skills; there is no chance to teach them
>
> (communication skills).

The participants are of the opinion that these skills are imperative for the students to survive in the present world. Most interviews and competitive exams are being conducted in English, but unfortunately the present student population realizes this only when it has graduated. By the time realization dawns, as Radha pointed out, "it is too late" because "they

didn't practice speaking English in college." It is because of this that Radha, Ashwini, and Laxmi attempt to instill the importance of English in their students while they are still in college.

> Now I tell my students that it is not like the old days when they (potential employers) used to see the paper degree and give you the job. It is the performance in the interview that is going to count. You cannot talk to them in the local language, you have to talk to them in English. They are going to ask you questions in English and you are going to have to answer in English. Unless you know how to answer them in the correct language, you will not get a good job.
>
> (Ashwini)

For these participants "communication skills" seems to imply having the ability to converse. It is in order to acquire this skill that all participants insisted that their students speak in English when they were in the classroom.

> But how are these communication skills to be acquired by the students? The participants commented that they could be acquired only through "talking". Radha said:

> …..I always tell them that language can be learnt only through speech, not the written form or hearing somebody. What I tell them is, try to speak; but when you speak, don't make a conscious effort.

It is not surprising that Radha made such a strong case for "speaking" considering the fact that this is how she learnt the language both within and outside the school– outside the school, she learned her English by talking with her siblings at home, and within the school walls, she had teachers who emphasized the importance of the speaking skill. "The purpose of learning the English language", Radha pointed out, "is not to get something by heart – a piece or summary; the stress should be more on how to communicate." And by communication what she means is

"talking". "Language should be practiced through talking," and Radha tries to motivate her students to talk; she tells them to "….speak; don't mind the mistakes. Don't bother about the language, don't bother about the tense." In Radha's opinion, the job of the teacher is not to merely motivate the students to talk. It is in fact to edit their output. The teacher serves as a monitor to her students. Radha argued that the main reason she got her students to talk was to "correct" them. And what is it that she corrects?

> ….pronunciation, I don't worry about. It is only with regarding 'tense' that I correct them mostly. Most of the Telugu medium students say, "I did not came yesterday". It is a very, very common mistake. So I would ask them, "What is the present tense of came"? They would answer, "Come"; and I would tell them it should be "I did not come yesterday." I would try and make them understand why they are wrong.

Radha focuses on grammar because she believes that when an individual speaks he/she must produce grammatically correct sentences. Producing error free sentences will help students get a good job, for potential employers are constantly looking for candidates who have a good command of the language.

Given the fact that "correctness" is important for Radha, it does not come as a surprise when she suggests that students can be coaxed into talking by giving importance to grammar exercises. Her argument is:

> ….the stress should be more on language exercises ….so that the student knows how to talk, how to communicate. Otherwise, you just give them a summary; they write it down, get it by heart and then write it (in the exam). That is not the

purpose of learning a language. Language should be practiced through talking.

But unfortunately, they (the students) don't talk English.

Radha emphasized the importance of grammar for both the teacher and the students. She argued that a teacher needed grammar in order for him "to emerge as a good teacher" and the students needed grammar-based exercises "so that they can take a cue from it (them) to make an attempt to speak in English." Although she didn't focus on grammar as a student, she wants her students to focus on it. Like Suresh, Radha seems to be suggesting a different way of learning a language than the one she used.

Ashwini, like Radha, lays a lot of emphasis on grammar as well. When asked what she would recommend to a student who wanted to improve his English, she said:

My students keep coming and asking me what they should do. I tell them to use the grammar textbook like a dictionary, and then read the newspaper always. And even if they are reading a short story or a novel, they should keep the dictionary with them. They should underline words they don't understand, look for the meaning.

She gives importance to grammar because of her experience in school.

I remember the teacher in my IX standard. She was an Anglo Indian and she used to teach grammar and unless all the 60 students in the class understood, she would not move to the next chapter. Once for my sake, she took one week over a chapter. She said, 'No, this girl has to understand before we move on.' That's the way grammar was taught those days.

While the grammar books and dictionaries can serve as a guide for students outside the classroom, within the classroom, Ashwini believes they can pick up the language by talking to

the teacher. But in her current college situation, she finds it difficult to "get the students to talk, after all they are not children. You cannot merely screw (twist) their ears and get them to talk." Although Ashwini believes that speaking is the important skill to be acquired, she is unable to provide them the necessary opportunities to speak because of the situation she is in. She is compelled to focus on their reading comprehension skills since all that the students are looking for in class is "textual explanation."

Laxmi, who learned her English thanks to her parents, contended that the best way to learn a language is by being exposed to individuals who speak it. The exposure should not be limited to the teacher alone: "….ultimately they (the students) have to be exposed to a lot more people who speak English – not just one. In everyday life if they want to talk fluently, they should keep talking to people around them." In order to achieve this, there should be cooperation from other people also. As a teacher in an elementary school, she had no problems motivating her students to talk:

> I would be like a friend to them and ask them things like "What did you have
>
> today?" or "What do you do after you go back home from school?" I would never
>
> ask them about the contents of the lesson, the grammar or the syllabus. So I would
>
> just talk to them and they would come and talk to me.

By making students talk, she was able to identify their mistakes and correct them: "Once they open themselves to me I can know where they are going wrong and their point of weakness. So in that way I would definitely correct them whenever they talk to me." Although, in the current situation, like Ashwini, Laxmi finds it difficult to motivate students to talk in the classroom; she is quite certain that the best way to learn a language is by "talking." In her biographical sketch, it was pointed out that Laxmi had learned much of her English outside the classroom talking to her

father. The method that she seems to be recommending for her students (namely, speaking) appears to be similar to the one that she herself had used when she was learning English.

While Radha's and Laxmi's beliefs about language learning have been influenced by their learning experience outside the classroom, others like Ashwini, Janaki, and Suresh seem to have been influenced by their classroom experience. How these beliefs about language learning play out in the classroom and what results they have on the teaching practices of the participants will be looked at in the next chapter.

<u>Beliefs about teaching Morals</u>

According to the participants, a good teacher is one who not only ensures that the students learn English, but also one who goes the extra mile in teaching them the difference between right and wrong, between good and evil. The following excerpt illustrates how for someone like Ashwini, a teacher plays a dual role:

> I think it is the duty of every teacher to not only impart education, but also to impart certain moral values. They should tell the students what is good and what is bad. I think we have to trigger off that kind of an analytical thinking. The teachers shouldn't take it for granted that it is in all of us; I think it has to be taught. I feel that as a teacher, it is my duty to make students think about right and wrong.

Janaki endorsed these beliefs of Ashwini, when she commented: "The students, who are young boys and girls today, should know what is right and wrong, what is ethical, what is good and what is bad." In the pressure packed world of today where both parents work, and do not have time to mould the impressionable minds of their teenage children, the onus of teaching right

from wrong falls on the teacher. The teacher becomes a surrogate parent. "The student is all the time away from home. How long can the mother look into it? I take it as my moral responsibility to teach them all these things," said Ashwini. For her, "these things" implies not only teaching students right from wrong, but providing them instructions on matters of etiquette – how to sit in the classroom, how to greet the teacher, how to reply, etc.

Suresh was the only participant who didn't harp on this theme; the remaining four, however, believe that that the teaching of morals is an integral part of teaching. It is not something that the participants feel reluctant to do, but feel obligated to do. This is what Radha said:

> I feel that it is our responsibility to teach them morals because their future is not as easy as ours. I think it is the duty of the teacher to tell them that times are difficult and they have to properly try to equip themselves so that they live a better life than their parents or elders.

For Laxmi, there are no classes specially earmarked for the teaching of morals, they are woven into the patterns of her daily class.

> During all these regular classes, I also give them a bit of moral class. Some students definitely like this and I think they motivate the other students to come. I don't moralize all the time. Otherwise they will get disgusted.

The teacher is seen as an individual who can not only help students learn English, but also as someone who can help them learn about life. Which of these roles is more dominant and how they play out in the classroom will be discussed in the next chapter.

<u>Beliefs about relating literature to life</u>

The textbooks once they are prescribed, you have them. They become your companions for at least half a decade or more; they are there and you are there and they are a reality that cannot be wished away. So you use them and every year you do the same kind of thing. You cover familiar territory. (Suresh)

Before talking about this theme, there are a few things that need to be said about how a syllabus gets "prescribed" at the undergraduate level in India. Unlike in the United States, a curriculum is not determined by the course instructor, but by the Board of Higher Education. This body invites a group of Professors and teachers of English to study the various textbooks available in the market and decide which would be the most useful for the students. Once the committee has decided which textbooks are the most appropriate, they are then prescribed by the university; all colleges, both private and government, throughout the state use them. At the end of the academic year, the students in all these colleges have a common exam. In order to arrive at the common set of questions, the university invites teachers of English from different colleges and asks each one of them to come up with as many questions as possible. A senior member from the university usually decides which questions to use in the final exam. The questions are then printed by the university authorities and sent to the various colleges across the state a few days before the examination. It is not uncommon for question papers to "leak" before an exam.

Given the fact that the prescribed textbooks in most universities in India are not frequently changed, teachers often have the unenviable task of teaching the same the same set of lessons year after year. To overcome the feeling of "boredom" and "stagnation" that they often feel when confronted with such a chore, and to make the lessons more relevant to the students, the five participants take recourse to "switching" between the text and the real world. "I do a lot

of switching," said Suresh, "like moving from the text to events and realities and ideas in the larger world. Ideas in circulation in the larger cosmos…." Suresh expressed the belief that teachers often resort to switching in order to "relate what you are saying to everyday life, to their (the students') everyday existence. You relate literature to life and you tell them that this is all about you people." As the following excerpt shows, Radha expressed something very similar.

> I feel we can definitely relate a given piece of writing to everyday life. Whatever poem I read (in class), I try to always relate it to life and see how best I can make them (students) think about the realities around them.

The other three participants also attempt to find connections between the text and the world familiar to the students. Both Janaki and Laxmi achieve this by turning to "certain popular topics" that are constantly written/talked about in the media. Laxmi commented:

> What I do is I read the lesson and I correlate it to the current events.…….the other day when I was teaching the bio-technology students *What makes an Indian* (the name of the lesson) there was a lot of matter there that I could correlate to the present day politics, the thinking of our politicians.

> Radha too turns to the media to find links: "I do make use of the incidents from the newspaper, journals and items from the television." Although all three women said that they make use of the media to find connections, the manner in which they use the various incidents reported is very different. Radha, for example, has a collection of newspaper clippings which she thinks can be used in the classroom. When she enters the classroom she knows which stories/incidents she is likely to use. Laxmi, on the other hand, makes no such preparation when it comes to relating literature to life; the linking is spontaneous: "When the issue comes up, I somehow remember the events and do it (link them)."

While the women turn to the media in order to make the links between literature and life, Suresh the only participant in the study who has a Ph. D, turns his attention to great works of literature. He attempts to draw the students' attention to the similarity between the text and well known classics like "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Aesop's Fairy Tales".

I would tell those stories from the Ancient Classics or the Arabian Nights, Aesop's Fables and the great work of the masters…. Any classic is related to any other thing. It depends on your inventiveness as to how you discover the linkages.

The reasons why the participants relate the text to the outside world are different. Suresh, for example, switches in order to make his classes "interesting": "I have discovered one thing. If you want to make your lectures interesting, you just can't afford to stick to the text, stay close to the text." Furthermore, according to Suresh, moving outside the text provides more interaction between students and the teacher.

….you see, where the text is concerned, it is not a two way interaction. But they (the students) would like to move outside the text and interact with me there. There is a different kind of topography… As I said, I cross or move out of the text and its circumscribed boundaries and there is so much to talk about that they don't get bored.

Others like Radha and Laxmi move beyond the boundaries of the text in an attempt to get the students to think. Laxmi said:

So when I quote to them a news item from the newspaper, they are very much anxious to listen to it, and then they also start thinking about it. For instance, we had a non-detail lesson with the title *Tension Kerosene*. It is a typical Indian story, set in the typical Indian situation, the dowry kind of set up. The girl is killed for

dowry, and also because she doesn't produce a son to continue the legacy. I asked

the students to put themselves in that situation and tell me what they felt, what

their reactions would be.

By putting students in situations where they are compelled to think, the teachers hope that

it will result in their talking; and this is only possible when the teacher moves outside the

textbook. Radha commented.

I am making them think also about the problems that they are very much living in.

So through the problems they are trying to give out their emotions, feelings in the

form of language expression. These are the two things that I think I am able to do.

One is to make them talk and the other thing is to make them think.

The participants in the study maintained that a teacher must make connections between

the text and real life in order to make the teaching interesting not only for the students but also

for the teacher. How this belief interacts with their other beliefs and to what extent the classroom

situation permits them to make such connections will be discussed in the next chapter.

Beliefs about completing the syllabus

Research in the field of belief studies suggests that not all beliefs of a teacher are evolved

during the apprenticeship of observation stage. Nettle (1998) and Richards and Lockhart (1994)

maintain that the beliefs system of a teacher continues to evolve over the years, and at times new

beliefs are formed and old ones altered when teachers enter a new working environment. The

next few beliefs which will be discussed have probably been shaped by institutional factors.

A belief that is shared by all participants is that the traditional curriculum should be the

driving force that determines what a teacher does in the classroom. "Covering the material" as

laid out in the university prospectus should always take precedence over everything else that happens in the language classroom. Radha commented:

> ….the goal and motive of our English teaching is to complete the syllabus; my aim is also to make them get proper marks in English…..I feel that whatever is given as a piece of writing to be explained, it is my moral duty to make them understand in the period of time given to me.

Ashwini expressed a similar sentiment when she said: "The syllabus should be completed in time. That is there in the corner of the mind." According to the participants, this belief that the syllabus must be completed is shared by the students as well. It is their "topmost priority" said Laxmi, and they would like the teachers to complete it in the quickest time possible. Ashwini argued:

> The students come to the class merely and sheerly for the purpose of getting the syllabus completed. The earlier the syllabus is completed, the earlier they can relax. No coming to class, no need of attending classes, no need of coming to college.

What the students want, Suresh commented, is for "the teacher to skip to the prescribed texts and be done with it." They don't want their teachers to be scholars and "provide additional information from journals." This "teach, get done with it" attitude, often compels teachers to "rush" through the lessons in order to finish the curriculum. The teachers keep up such a frenetic pace during the first two months of the academic year that according to Janaki they manage to complete nearly "60-70 per cent" of the syllabus. Suresh sees certain advantages for both teachers and students in proceeding so quickly.

We all try to complete the syllabus, even if we have to rush through it, because this way the students have time to revise at their own leisure. The teachers feel they have done their job once they have completed (the syllabus), and then students need not attend any more classes.

Teaching comes to an end when the final lesson has been dealt with; teachers "do not revise anything with the students--both students and teachers stop coming to class after December."

Since the intent is to complete the syllabus as quickly as possible, students are seldom given any assignments or tests. Radha commented that teachers must "deliver the goods" which will be useful to the students; they must remember that "the target is examination so he (the student) has to understand what is in the lesson, and go and reproduce it in the form of a summary."

Another reason why teachers of English attempt to complete the syllabus as quickly as possible is because of the demands put on them by the teachers of science and commerce. Very often, these teachers of "optional" subjects need additional hours to complete their "portions." As a result, the classes earmarked for English on the timetable are taken over by them. Teachers of English are compelled to give up their "classes to the optional teachers so that they can complete their syllabus by January end." Although students come to college till the end of January or mid February, they do so only for their courses in science or accountancy; language classes, for the most part, come to an end by mid December.

With the "rush" to complete the curriculum, teachers are often forced to adopt methods which go against their beliefs about what constitutes good teaching. Being "hard pressed for time" some teachers don't even attempt to motivate their students. Radha commented:

….when I walk into a class, I straightaway tell them, now look, this piece that I am going to read to you is neither to delight nor to instruct. You have to read it because it is the prescribed thing. So whether you are really interested in the poem or not, you have to pay attention to it because you have to write an exam.

At other times, the participant is compelled to overlook the nasty behavior of the students. As Laxmi pointed out, "ultimately I have to do my job. Whatever their behavior is, I have to put up with that. I have to finish my syllabus."

The belief that these participants have about "syllabus completion" is perhaps best captured by Radha when she said, "the goal and motive of our English teaching is to complete the syllabus." Although the university exams do not take place till early March, students stop coming to college mostly by the end of January. In the case of English, students stop attending classes in December, for after that, teachers of other subjects (the "first class citizens") usurp the classes meant for English. There seems to be a constant pressure on the teachers of English – both from students and from the "optional" subject teachers- to complete their syllabus as quickly as possible. What possible effect this has on the teaching practices and potential media use will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Beliefs about classroom methods

This section will focus on the participants' perception about their teaching methods that they use in the classroom. It will highlight the teaching practices that the participants believe they adopt and employ in the language classroom. In other words, it will report on what the participants say they do, but will not include any information gathered during the observation period to either contradict or support the participants' claims.

One of the areas that all participants agreed on is that given the fact that the current set of language textbooks have been around for nearly a decade, it is no longer necessary for them to prepare for each class. Suresh and Laxmi stated categorically that when it comes to prose and poetry they "don't prepare" before they enter the classroom. Radha explained why she deems it unnecessary to spend time preparing for her language classes.

I don't prepare every day and go to the class because I am familiar with the poem, the background of the poem and so it becomes easy for me….the textbook hasn't changed for ten years. We teach the same lessons over and over again, so why do we have to go through the text and start thinking about how we have to teach?

Suresh argued that while he doesn't invest any time preparing for the "prose, poetry and the non detailed parts of the syllabus", he does feel it necessary to put in half an hour of work for the grammar classes he has to teach. "Where grammar is concerned, even the best teachers trip up. You have to be careful. Prose and poetry are an easy cakewalk because you have taught it for so many batches; it is just a repeat performance." While Suresh finds teaching the same textbooks a "cakewalk", Ashwini finds the experience "stagnating;" for her, teaching "is not challenging" anymore. Since the participants claim there is no preparation involved in their teaching what is it that they do when they enter the classroom?

One of the practices that all teachers follow is to read the text aloud. Whether it is prose or poetry, the participants spend a lot of time reading the text aloud. While all participants argued that they were compelled to do this because students seldom brought their textbooks to class, Suresh and Radha provided additional reasons as to why they read or made their students read from their textbooks. For Suresh, reading the text aloud was a way of spending time in class. "That is the way you can spend 50 minutes (in class)….you stretch out the lifespan of the lecture

by reading aloud. Reading aloud consumes half the time." Another reason for reading aloud is to sustain the interest of the students. He argued that in order to maintain the interest of students in a subject that they do not consider important, a teacher has to resort to different techniques. One of them is reading aloud. "The average student's span of attention is not more than ten or fifteen minutes. To keep their minds from flagging, you sometimes read aloud." Once he begins to read the text aloud, he becomes "the textbook. My facial expressions, my speech is intended to bring the textbook alive. Through the auditory faculty they (the students) pick up whatever little bit of the text that they can."

Sometimes, Suresh gets his students to read aloud because it provides him an opportunity to take a break.

I tell them to read a passage and ask them to allow me to take a breather or a snooze and while one fellow does the reading and the others listen, I close my eyes and I pretend I am listening. But I would be sleeping, taking a catnap and snoozing.

Radha, on the other hand, makes her students read aloud the prose lessons because she believes that by doing so she is helping them improve their pronunciation.

For example, prose I make them read so that they can improve their pronunciation. Since I cannot teach them pronunciation as such, I try to make them read. If they are unable to pronounce any difficult words, then I tell them how to. By doing this (making them read aloud), I am not only getting them to talk in English, but also giving them the right pronunciation.

What is of interest here is that Radha seems to be suggesting that for her "reading aloud" is equivalent to "talking."

None of the participants allows the students to read the prescribe poems aloud because they believe "the language that the poet uses in his writing is different from prose." Since the students are unfamiliar with the vocabulary, it would be unfair to ask them to read first. When it comes to poetry, it is only the teachers who read aloud. As teachers, they have a fixed routine for teaching poetry. The following is Laxmi's.

> First, I read the introduction about the poem and the poet, then I give additional information about the poet – which age he lived in and what it was like. I then read the poem aloud. I read it again because some students may not have been paying attention the first time. The second time I read it, the students know how to pronounce the various words. I then read individual stanzas and then explain their meaning stanza by stanza. I ask them to underline the similes, metaphors and we also talk about the rhyme scheme. Once I have finished all the stanzas, I read the poem again and give the overall meaning, show them how the various stanzas are related to one another. When I have finished explaining I ask the students to read the poem aloud.

Ashwini follows a similar routine.

> Since they don't have the text in front of them, naturally when I begin, I begin with a brief summary of what I am going to be doing. I then proceed to discuss the title, the background of the poet and the age in which he lived. And then I start the poem; I read it aloud once and then read it again with more expressions because I want them to understand.

Then like Laxmi, Ashwini begins to explain the meaning of individual stanzas before providing the overall meaning. The language that the participants use for this purpose is always simple. If the students don't understand, the teacher then provides a translation.

There is little difference in the manner in which poetry and prose are taught. The only tangible difference seems to be that in the case of prose, the students read the lesson aloud, while in the case of poetry, it is the teachers who read. The reasons for this have already been provided in the foregoing paragraphs. Here's Janaki account of how she teaches a lesson in prose.

If it is an English medium class, I give them an idea of what the lesson is about. I then read the paragraph and then give them the gist. Then I give them the line by line explanation of the lesson…..For the T (local language) medium students before I start reading the paragraph, I try to give them the gist of the lesson. I read the paragraph and give the line by line explanation. If there are difficult words, I give them the translations.

Suresh follows a similar style as well – reading aloud and explicating.

I read each paragraph and explicate the lines. I read out the pilot sentences at the beginning and tell them the key to a paragraph is the first sentence generally. I explain to them that it is called a pilot sentence because it gives you the idea of the entire paragraph. As you explain each paragraph, you illustrate with examples from the text and outside the text.

Of the five participants, four maintained that other than providing the "gist" and a "line by line explanation", one of their aims of teaching was to link every lesson to the real world outside. Janaki was the only participant who never ventured beyond the textbook because she felt

students became "restless" whenever they were asked to make this transition. Students were content when teachers provided the gist of the lesson.

As discussed, the method followed by the participants for both prose and poetry is similar. The difference seems to be as to who reads aloud the text and the number of times it is read aloud. In the case of a poem, it is the teacher who reads it aloud twice before he/she commences to explain the meaning. A prose lesson, on the other hand, is read aloud by a teacher or a student; after each paragraph the students are provided with "the gist." Otherwise, whether it's poetry or prose, the teacher does two things in the beginning: he provides the students with background information about the author and the age he lived in, and gives them a "gist" of the lesson.

Considering the fact that the participants have to teach English to students whose grasp of the language varied from "excellent" to "very bad," it is not surprising that one of the themes that emerged during the interview was the kind of language that teachers should use in their classes. The views expressed by the participants varied somewhat. Suresh, for example, didn't raise this issue at all. He is of the opinion that a teacher's job is to merely "lecture".

> A teacher should talk; lecturing is talking. He should be convincing. You have to
>
> convince them (the students) that what you are saying is the gospel truth. There is
>
> no escape from it, and they have to accept what you have said. If you can do that,
>
> then you are a good teacher.

Radha, however, didn't agree with this; she argued that just because "teachers have command over the language" they cannot "keep on saying something." A point of view endorsed by Laxmi as well. She maintained that a teacher's "language has to be very simple initially for her to be understood by the students. My English shouldn't be beyond the reach of the students." Like the

others, Janaki too "uses very, very simple English to make them (the students) understand." Ashwini contended that the kind of language a teacher uses in the classroom is determined by the students present. Given the type of students who attended her classes, she was compelled to use "simple language." In a context like hers there was no point using "big words". Her duty was to the students and because her students are weak, she felt:

> I feel that I am paid for the work that I do and I have to do justice to the students. Supposing I use bombastic language, big words, if I try to thrust my vocabulary on them, what is the use? What do they get in the bargain? Nothing will go into their heads and the next time they won't come (to class). Or if they come, they will be talking and they will be disturbed, distracted.

Radha, like Ashwini, keeps her audience in mind when teaching.

> When I enter the class for the first time, I just ask those students who are from the Telugu medium background and who are the English medium students. So based on the more number of English medium students, my concentration automatically shifts to the Telugu medium boys. When I teach, I always have my Telugu medium students in mind, if they are able to understand my explanation, my pronunciation, etc I am happy.

To ensure that the students understand what they are being taught, participants often take recourse to translating words into Telugu. This is what Radha does: "When I talk to the Telugu medium students, I try to find a word in Telugu and then give it to them." Laxmi, too often resorts to translation; she translates the similes and metaphors into Telugu. Janaki, on the other hand, does a lot more translation work

I read the paragraph and give line-by-line explanation in Telugu for the Telugu medium students. If there are difficult words, then we have to give them the mother tongue meaning also. Before I start reading the paragraph, I try to give them the gist of the lesson. Then I read paragraph after paragraph and then give them the explanation; and then here and there if there are difficult words, I give them the meaning and sometimes we give them the Telugu meanings also. If it is an English medium class, I give them an idea of what the lesson is about and then read the paragraph and give the gist of the paragraph. Then we will give the explanation.

The teaching practices used by the participants seem to be similar – providing background information about the author and the age in which the text was written, reading aloud of the text, explanation of the stanza/paragraph in simple language, and providing mother tongue equivalents as and when required. How these practices are carried out in the language classroom and to what extent they are successful in enabling students to comprehend will be discussed in the next chapter.

<u>Beliefs about students</u>

The beliefs about students are contradictory; senior teachers like Ashwini, Radha and Suresh, observed that based on "linguistic skills", one could argue that the students who enrolled today were "qualitatively" far superior to those who joined the college ten years ago. While there has been this improvement in student quality, the participants noted that the students' "attitude" towards the subject has shown little or no change over the years; it remains what it was ten years ago. "As a teacher of General English I feel that they (the students) don't take the

subject (English) seriously," commented Suresh. He goes on to qualify the statement: "It is not that they are not bothered about just English – they are not bothered about the second language," and since they are not interested, language classes, including English, are often reduced to being a source of entertainment. They become, in Suresh's opinion, "fun filled hours" for the students with "quite a few chaps trying to make your life miserable; interrupting, asking stupid questions and trying to act smart with what they think are their witticisms. They attempt to derail your tempo and thought flow." While Laxmi doesn't talk about any disciplinary problem in particular as Suresh does, she too believes that most students don't take the subject seriously. She cites the example of students working on assignments related to physics and accounts while they are sitting in the English class.

> ....before or after the English class they (students) might be having their accounts
>
> class or physics class. If it is an accounts class, the sir would do the sum halfway
>
> and then leave it, keeping the students busy for the rest of the class. When I teach,
>
> I sometimes see them working on the problem.

The participants put forward several reasons as to why most students seldom took English seriously. One of the reasons is that the marks that they get in English are not taken into account when determining their overall G. P. A. As Radha pointed out, "They have to pass, but as far as getting the division is concerned, it (the marks in English) doesn't count. Only the electives are counted." It is because of this, Ashwini believed, that many students "shut their eyes" when it comes to English even though they may be "very, very weak in the language."

Another reason that the participants believed that most students don't take English seriously is that they failed to recognize the important role that it was going to play in their future life. Suresh remarked, "Quite a few of them don't take it seriously because they think that

learning English is not a bread and butter thing; that it doesn't help them get a job." However, the reality is that in the present Indian context, English plays a significant role in getting individuals jobs. In most cases, job interviews are conducted in English, but unfortunately, according to Radha, most students "realize it only when they go for the interview for a job after the completion of the course. It is too late by then." Suresh argued that while they are in college, students are more focused on getting a degree.

> When they join a college, they think that acquiring a degree is all that you need to get a job. Their eyes are not fully open when they enter college to the reality of the job interview, hunting for a job, going from one place to another, attending countless interviews.

Realizing the importance of English, some teachers like Ashwini inform the students the crucial role that English is going to play in their future life:

> Now I tell my students that it is not like the old days when they (potential employers) used to see the paper degree and give them the job. It is the performance in the interview that is going to count…and unless you know how to answer them (the interviewers) in the correct language, you will not get a good job.

> Unfortunately, such warnings fall on deaf ears; most students do not heed them. But this is not to say that everyone turns a blind eye to English; a "small minority," according to Suresh, has begun to take an active interest in the language "because they feel that communication skills are an asset." Radha commented that globalization has made students realize that "they have to talk in English and that they are not getting jobs only because they don't know it (English)." As a

result of this awakening, some students at least have begun to attend English classes regularly, and Radha talked about this change in attitude enthusiastically.

All 60 boys are coming to class, that too for an English class! So you see attitudes must have changed; they must have realized that coming and attending English class is also very important for them.

But such attendance is in the minority; most students continue to show their indifference to the language by absenting themselves from class. Although there is an attendance policy, which requires students to be present 75% of the time; it is not strictly enforced by the teachers. Ashwini pointed that the policy was employed by the teachers only to

….scare them (the students) and intimidate them in the beginning. Second years (students in their second year) know that they don't have to attend classes in order to write the exams. It's only in the first year that they are scared and come regularly.

Janaki qualified this by claiming that the scare tactics employed by teachers worked only in the first couple of months of the first year; after that the students become impervious to threats: "Initially they come in full strength from the month of June to August. After that they attend only the optional classes and stop attending the language classes." Commenting on the attendance policy adopted by the department, the youngest participant, Laxmi said: "Here there is no stress on attendance, regularity; the students know that even without their presence they can somehow manage the attendance and still get the hall ticket" (The university issues a candidate a hall ticket which allows him to sit for his exams, only after his name has been approved/recommended by the college that he has been attending.) The students who generally attend regularly are those that receive a Government scholarship; and these students are

obligated to attend because if they do not have the required attendance they will be stripped of their scholarship. As for the other students: "They come to attend the other optional classes and they just walk out. They don't wait in large numbers for English classes," said Ashwini. And because most students don't make an appearance on a regular basis, English teachers are often compelled to "fabricate attendance"; they are often compelled to mark students present even when they are absent because it is imperative for the college to send some students to write the university exams. In most cases, according to Suresh, the students that do attend English classes do so, "for the attendance. Secondly, they cannot loiter on the campus. They will be called over by the Principal if they do that. So they have to sit in the classroom."

Since most students often come to class unwillingly, they make their displeasure apparent in several ways. One of the ways is by not bringing their prescribed textbooks. "The first and perennial problem with our students is that they don't get their textbooks," said Ashwini; a point of view that was endorsed by all her colleagues. Suresh wryly commented,

The textbook I think is an invisible entity. Very much there, but not there. It is there in my hands but it is not there in their hands. So I become a reader for them. I am the textbook.

Radha believes that this lack of textbooks in class is because the students "don't even buy their textbooks. For her, students not bringing their textbooks was a clear indication of their lack of interest in the subject.

….students don't bring textbooks at all. It shows that they are least interested in the subject and the subject doesn't matter to them. In the tenth class, English is also included in the grand total, not at the degree level. The examination rule is such that it doesn't give much importance to English.

In order to ensure that there are enough textbooks in the classroom, teachers resort to different methods. Laxmi attempts to shame the students into bringing their textbooks; she informs them that by failing to bring them, they are showing their disrespect for the teacher. Others try and find a practical solution to the problem. Here's how Radha solved hers:

> Sometimes I collect all my colleagues' books and give it to them so that at least three fellows will have one textbook. I have done that also. I become very helpless when I have to teach them poetry and when they (the students) just walk in and sit down and listen.

Suresh sometimes shares his own textbook with the students: "Most of them (students) don't have the textbooks. So I give mine to a boy and ask him to read it and give the answers while I stand by his side."

Another manner in which the students show their indifference towards the subject is by refusing to do the assignments given by teachers. Suresh lamented the fact that students seldom did their assignments: "I ask them to write a summary of a poem or an essay on the lesson, but they don't do it." A similar view was expressed by Janaki:

> Prose and poetry they (students) just listen to; they don't want to do any exercises, especially degree students. They only want to listen; they don't want to write anything. That is why they are not able to write good English…. There are about 50 or 60 students in a class and maybe five or six students will write (do their assignments) because they are interested and they will show us. The others won't write.

Laxmi pointed out that there is no incentive for the teacher to give the students assignments because for most teachers "…students coming to class is the greatest thing. And to retain them in

class is the next greatest thing." When students are given an assignment, they not only fail to do it, but also stop coming to classes. In the following excerpt Laxmi recounts how her experience of giving assignments backfired on her.

> When I give them something for paragraph writing, after telling them and elaborating on how to write a paragraph, and ask them to come prepared for the next class, no one turns up. Even the regular students stop coming….when I ask them to answer questions in the classroom they don't do. In a class of seventy students there will be 30 students present in class. And of those 30 students hardly 10 students will answer.

For the participants who have been in this college for some time, this lack of enthusiasm in doing an assignment is no cause for worry. This is best captured by Suresh's comments; when asked if the students' lack of interest in assignments makes him frustrated, he replied: "No, it doesn't worry me. It makes my job easier. I don't have to do any correction. It should worry me, but it doesn't because I have got used to it."

Another reason why students absent themselves from the English class is that very often they are "confident they can learn English by other means also", and one of these means is by taking recourse to the ubiquitous "guides" (notes). Radha, insists that even those students who don't buy the "textbooks", "buy the guides", and "just by heart the answers" in them and "reproduce them in the exams." (It should be mentioned here that the concept of plagiarism doesn't exist in the India; at least not at the school and college levels. From early childhood, students are expected to memorize and reproduce what is present in the textbook. What teachers look for is content, not originality. When teachers give notes to their students, it is not unusual for students who excel in the art of memorizing to reproduce the notes in the exams, verbatim. It

does not surprise a teacher therefore to find that all students have written the same answer to a particular question.) According to Janaki, "guides" provide "model question papers" and readymade answers to questions that are likely to be asked in the exams; students read and memorize the answers and succeed in getting 60 to 70% in the final exam. Since the "guides" help them to overcome the obstacle of an examination quite easily, most students do not realize how weak they are in English. The realization dawns on them only when they leave college. Janaki said:

> Here, as long as they are in college, they neglect the language (English). They take it for granted that they know English very well. But when they have to draft a letter or write something, then they realize that they are unable to do it; then they seek the help of those language institutes (private institutions which teach English).

Ashwini, a veteran of 33 years of teaching, endorsed Janaki's point of view.

> It is only when they have graduated and they are applying for some universities abroad, it is then they come to the conclusion that they are not very good in speaking or writing English. So they come back to us to ask for some advice.

> The fact that students are more dependent on the guides, than the teachers, does not unduly worry the participants. In fact, two of them, Janaki and Laxmi, found fault with teachers for making students turn to notes. They argued that one of the reasons why students often gravitate towards guides is that teachers themselves resort to them; and when students cotton on to this fact, they realize the futility of attending classes. Laxmi explained how this happens:

Unfortunately, there are some lecturers who teach only from guides and the students are intelligent enough to understand what the teachers are doing. They realize that there is no point in attending classes.

Another reason that students made guides an integral part of their study kit is that very often teachers are incomprehensible. Laxmi argued that:

….the lecturers of the other departments are not so good in English. There are of course lecturers who are quite good in English but there are other people who are very poor in communicating. So the students don't understand them….they feel that there is no point in attending the classes; the guides are better than the classes.

Janaki, like Laxmi, blamed the teachers for forcing students to resort to guides. "We (the teachers) are not giving any notes, so they (students) have to depend on the guides." Although she did provide notes when she joined the college five years ago, she found that the students seldom used them in answering questions; instead they chose to "reproduce" the answers provided by the guide. She argued that the reason why the students did this was because they preferred the "simple kind of essays that are given in the guides" to the "good language" employed by the participants in their notes.

The participants do not have a positive opinion of the students; they see them as individuals who have little or no interest in the subject, who come to class merely to have "fun", and as people who are not dependent on them to pass exams. How these negative beliefs about the students interact with their other existing beliefs and what results they have on classroom practices will be looked into in the following chapter.

Beliefs about the media

Some of the interview questions were related to media use in the language classroom, and of the five participants, three (Janaki, Laxmi, and Radha) claimed to have had hands on experience using the media to teach English. The other two, Ashwini and Suresh, though they had never used media, knew of, and had talked to people who had used them in the language classroom. Among the five, Radha is the only one to have actually used the media in the present college. Janaki experimented with the tape recorder when she was teaching in a women's college, while Laxmi used audio and print material (newspaper clippings) when she taught in a spoken English institute and in her second job as an elementary school teacher. The beliefs about media use of these participants are based either on their own experience of using the media or on the experience of others who have used them.

Although not all participants offer unqualified support for the media, four of the five believe that the media have a place in the educational context. Their endorsement for the media is however, muted and at times contradictory. Even though Janaki supports the use of media, it is not a very strong endorsement. When asked if she would use the media she replied, "I think it would be good." Suresh, on the other hand, begins by making a strong case for the media by stating categorically that the "media can and should be used." He argued that using the media would be a "good thing" and then said,

> Instead of reading passages from the text, you compress the lecture time and
> spend part of the academic year screening films or recordings of performances.
> When compared to the traditional classroom, learning in this context would be
> very interesting for the students because now they will be subject to various
> auditory stimuli- whenever the media are used, they will have the opportunity to

listen to "multiple voices" – not just the teacher's. And when students see other people using the language, they will on their own learn to use the language effortlessly.

Radha, who believes that the function of a teacher is to help students acquire "communication skills," argued for the promotion of media use in the language classroom because in her opinion communication skills are precisely the skills that some forms of media encouraged. "I would love to use the media on a regular basis because visual media is very, very effective both for listening skills and also for speaking." In her opinion, although the use of the media would make classes "more interesting" and "more challenging" for both teacher and student, their integration would mean a lot more work for the former. As a teacher, she herself didn't mind the additional work that this might involve.

While Radha and Suresh provided reasons why the media should be introduced into the classroom from a student's perspective, Ashwini made a case for their inclusion from the teacher's point of view. She argued that in the present context, teachers would welcome the media with open arms because most are "bored of teaching the same thing over and over again every year." She believes that the media will provide an opportunity for teachers to escape from their "take the textbook, read it, and explain it" style of teaching that most adopt in the language classroom. Like Radha, Ashwini sees the presence of the media in the classroom as something that will encourage students to "talk" resulting in a "broader range of discussions" than when the focus of attention is limited to the text.

Although the participants see the usefulness of the media in promoting language learning, when asked if they themselves would welcome the media into the language classroom, it was only Radha who said, "Yes." Suresh, Ashwini, Janaki and Laxmi, all said, "No." Their

reluctance to incorporate the media into the language classroom was based on one of the following: a) their own experience with using the media in the classroom; b) their knowledge of other teachers' experiences with the media; and c) their beliefs about how their students in the present college would respond/react to the presence of the media in the language classroom. Ashwini, for example, who earlier pointed out the advantages of bringing the media into the classroom, said that having seen her colleague Radha go "through all the ordeals" of using the media, she herself would "never" consider using them. When asked what materials, other than the textbook, she has used during her 33 years in the profession she replied, "Very frankly, and very honestly, nothing except the textbook." Though Ashwini claimed she is "bored of teaching the same thing (textbook) over and over again," she would "never" consider using the media with her students in this particular college because of their background: many of them come from a "rural background", with little or no knowledge of English. The only time that the English department tried to incorporate the media into the language classroom, it didn't result in much success. According to Ashwini, the failure was due to the students' lack of interest in English. It should be mentioned here that Ashwini herself wasn't involved in this exercise, but the manner she uses the pronoun "we" suggests that she was.

> We have a TV in the library and we moved it to the auditorium. We took our
>
> students there to see Pride and Prejudice because it was a part of their Non-
>
> detailed text. We showed it to them, and only those who could understand
>
> English, the accent and the dialog appreciated it. The rest didn't.

The reason that the students didn't enjoy watching the video according to Ashwini was because they were mostly non-English medium students who "come to the class only for the sake of attendance. That is all." When asked if she would ever consider using the media with these

students, she replied very candidly, "No!" She argued that she might consider using the media if she were teaching in a girls' college because

> Girls are by nature inquisitive and since they want to know more about everything they will be interested in the media. Boys are to the point….they just want the textual explanation and get on with it. When I talk about the poet, for example, most of them (the students) are not interested. Every class has only a handful of students who are really interested in knowing more about the poem, the poet, and the background. I have been teaching boys from the beginning of my career, and this is what I have noticed.

Later, she added.

> It's a fact that girls are more emotional than boys. May it be a book of tragedy, comedy or love and romance, it certainly has an impact on the mind and if the student's heart does not feel the touch of it, then the teacher's labor is lost. The tenderhearted girls feel, but the easygoing boys pay no heed.

> Ashwini's beliefs that girls are more inquisitive and more emotional than boys seem to stem from her own experience as a student. Talking about her favorite teacher and how she and her classmates responded in her classes, she said:

> There was nothing demonstrative about her…. But the way she used to read each line – we could see the expressions on her face. That was more important or maybe because girls are more emotional, we could read between the lines. We could read every expression on her face. Boys do not respond to me to that extent that we did to our teacher.

Since the boys in her present college show little or no enthusiasm, she herself would never consider using the media in the classroom. "When you are doing something, there should be a good response. If there is no response….what is the use of casting pearls away?"

Ashwini's contention that girls are different from boys is also endorsed by Janaki . While she found the media a useful tool to teach pronunciation to her students in her previous college, she has made no attempt to bring the media into the classroom in her current college. Like Ashwini, she believes there is a fundamental difference between boys and girls. She found teaching the students in her former college to be a much more enjoyable experience because the girls were much more serious about learning. She commented:

> They are very obedient, whatever work you give, they will do it. Not like the boys
>
> in this college who don't do any work. If I give them some work, one or two boys
>
> will do it and show it to me. But not the whole class. In the previous college, the
>
> whole class used to do it because they have more love for the language I feel.
>
> They wanted to learn.

This love and desire to learn the language was manifested in their numerous questions they posed that were not related to the actual text, but pertained to many other things.

> They used to say, 'We like English, Miss, and we want to learn. What is the right
>
> word, how is it pronounced?' They used to ask certain questions about origin of
>
> idioms and sometimes I also used to refer to books.

Because the girls showed so much interest in English, Janaki taught them the phonetic symbols so that they could use the dictionary to learn the pronunciation of words. Also, their enthusiasm encouraged her to bring media into the classroom. She used audiotapes to teach students the pronunciation of common words that were often mispronounced by Indians, and

although the students laughed at the strange way the words were pronounced, they were nevertheless "interested in listening to them (the tapes)." When she moved to her present college, the negative attitude that the students displayed towards English was so strong that she never considered the possibility of using the media. In Janaki's opinion, the boys "only want the explanation of the text. And if you go beyond that or attempt to teach them more than that, they look bored. These boys are not interested." As a result, during her five year stint at the present college, she has "so far not tried" to use the media; she has confined herself "to the text and explained it."

Suresh, who like Ashwini has never used the media, argued that given the current attitude of the students towards English, the media need not be brought into the classroom Even if they were, they would succeed in bringing about only "cosmetic changes" in the attitude of the students.

> The leopard is not going to change its spots. Maybe you will try to make the
>
> lectures more interesting and they (the students) will try to be more receptive. But
>
> the bottom-line is that they are going to come, listen and once they step out, the
>
> minds become clean slates again. It is because the subject that they are taking is
>
> not their elective.

Laxmi too is another teacher who has been influenced by the students' negative attitude towards English. As a result, she has never considered the possibility of using the media in the present college. In her earlier jobs, she had succeeded in making print and audio materials an integral part of her teaching practices. But in the present context she sees the media as being "totally irrelevant"; to make them "relevant", teachers needed to get the "cooperation" of not

only the students, but also the management. Laxmi believes that without the cooperation of the students the entire enterprise would turn out to be a "big flop."

"Frustrating" is how Radha described her experience of using the media in the classroom; she is the participant who attempted to use the Pride and Prejudice tape in the auditorium. She is also the only teacher in this group who brought her own tape recorder to college to play tapes on pronunciation.

> We tried this out with Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* to make the students
>
> aware of the Victorian setting – the dress, the period, etc. But they didn't stay
>
> after class hours. Out of a class of 60 people, hardly 5 or 10 people turned up
>
> because we had to present it to them after class hours, between 2 and 5. Anyway,
>
> those 5-10 students saw the film and they enjoyed it.

Although she hasn't had many students come to class when media have been used, she nevertheless endorsed their use in the language classroom. When asked if the media can be used in the current setup, she replied, "Definitely. They can be used and they have to be used. As I informed you, I have been using them in some of the classes where I could accommodate them." Radha's response to her students' attitude to English and media is somewhat contradictory. While the other participants in the study maintained that it is the current attitude of the students which has prevented them from using the media, Radha contended that the attitude of students has undergone dramatic changes in the past few years. She believes that students are showing their newfound interest in English by trying "not to bunk" their classes.

> ….my colleague tells me that the students are attending in large numbers and if
>
> the English teacher is not taking his or her class, they (the students) are walking
>
> up to him and saying, "Take the class"….So you see attitudes must have changed

– they must have realized that coming and attending English class is also very important for them.

But later she contradicted everything she said by claiming that although she is favorably disposed to the use of media in the language classroom, she finds it difficult to make them an integral part of her teaching practices because of the negative attitude that the students have towards English. "But because of the attitude of the student towards the language, maybe we as English teachers are not really in a position to use all these audio-video materials and see how best we can make use of them."

Laxmi and Suresh argued that there is no need for the media in the classroom since the task performed by the media can be done by the teacher as well. The teachers, in their opinion, can provide everything that the media can. "If all that has been put in the media is something that I can demonstrate or communicate to them (the students) in the class itself, I don't think I would use them," said Laxmi. She believes that what students need to be exposed to are not the media in the classroom, but people who can speak English. Using the media, she maintains,

> ….won't help them (the students) improve. It (the media) can only be a step in improving their English. But ultimately they have to be exposed to a lot more people who speak English – not just one or two. In everyday life if they want to speak fluently, they should keep talking to people around them.

Suresh believes that the media can be used as a source of entertainment; but entertainment is something that can be provided by the teacher as well: "You can even do this with or without the audio visual aids. Bringing in issues or telling them anecdotes or jokes or playing banter at times, easy give and take."

The main arguments put forward by the participants for not wanting to use the media in the present context was the indifferent attitude that students had towards English. Since the participants were reluctant to use the media, they were asked as to when they would consider using the media in the present context. A summary of the answers is discussed below.

<u>When will they use the media?</u>

No single theme emerged from their responses. Janaki didn't answer any of the questions related to this part; she seemed very certain that the media could not be used with the students in this particular college. Three participants felt that they needed "training" in order to use the media. Radha argued that she would continue using the media "provided the circumstances are there." What she required in order to use the media was a "Refresher Course or an Orientation Course on how to use them." On her own, she might find it difficult to use the media because normal teaching and teaching with media are very different things. "We have been traditional teachers and we have not been taught how to use the media in the class. Maybe if somebody can train us and tell us how we can use it (the media), it becomes easier for us." For her, such a training program should not only demonstrate how to incorporate the media into her teaching practices, but also give her hands on experience with the various equipment.

> If I have to use a computer or play a VCD, I would really not know how to
> operate it. I can probably switch it on and off, but other than that I have little
> knowledge about the equipment. For all that we need a kind of training to operate
> these things because (right now) we have nil knowledge.

While Radha is very specific about the kind of training she wants, Laxmi, the only participant without a tenured position (in private colleges, only permanent employees are sent on

training programs) is rather vague. When asked whether she would consider using the media, she replied:

> If I am trained in them, I would definitely use them…I think you need some kind of training to use these things. Every few years, lecturers should keep in touch with the changes and the new trends in teaching that are taking place. They should equip themselves with them.

Being a contract employee, Laxmi has never participated in any of the Refresher Courses that her senior colleagues have and since she has never received any training in media use, she has no idea of the kind of training required. Given a chance she would like to attend a few such courses and learn how the media can be used, but "ultimately it is the principal and the Management who have a say" in the matter.

Ashwini, who had earlier argued that she would personally "never" use the media because she didn't feel the need for them, made a case for training programs being provided for novice teachers. Unlike Radha, Ashwini believes that experienced teachers, even those who have never used the media, can figure out how to incorporate them into the classroom. "As an experienced person I might be able to use the media, but the others may not. So they (novice teachers) need the training. That will be always better." As far as she is concerned training programs "are but a wee bit useful to senior teachers with a long length of service."

Another theme that three of the participants touched on was making the media selections relevant to the syllabus and to the final exams that the students sat for at the end of the academic year. Laxmi believes that the only way that teachers can get students interested in the media is by choosing and showing programs that are relevant to the texts: "If what is shown is a part of their curriculum and if they are expected to answer questions on them in the final exams, then they

(the students) will respond to them (the media)." If the content of the media are unrelated to the syllabus, and if teachers continue to employ them regularly, "then there might be some problems" because "You definitely have to give importance to the syllabus." Ashwini endorsed what Laxmi said when she maintained that in order to get the students take the media seriously, they have to make them relevant to the curriculum.

> I repeat it (the media) is interesting only if I use it occasionally and not on a regular basis because the students come to the class merely and sheerly for the purpose of getting the syllabus completed…Unless it is useful for them, the students will not take it up….Again, coming to the question paper, if they have to answer some questions related to the media, then it's good.

Both Ashwini and Laxmi made these arguments without having used the media in the present context. But the participant who has, Radha, comes to a similar conclusion as well; she observed that students are "not interested" in the media because "they feel it is a waste of time. They feel I am wasting their time by not teaching them what is in the prescribed syllabus." What the participants seem to be suggesting is that media will become relevant for both teachers and students when they can be linked to the prescribed syllabus. Ultimately, as Laxmi said, "importance has to be given to the syllabus."

Suresh and Radha requested for some specific changes to be made in the college set up before they would consider using the media. They were the only two participants who wanted the number of students in each class to be brought down from the present 60-70 to a manageable 10 or 20. Suresh said that he would be willing to consider the possibility of using the media "if the numbers are manageable. The ideal situation is using audio visual aids with ten students." Radha too wants smaller sized classes, "Personally, I would very much like to use the media. And as I

informed you earlier, I did try it in my class but it was just not possible in practice because of the large number of students in a classroom." Reducing the size of the classes, according to her, would make it easier for the teacher to "control" the students.

The bureaucracy that is involved in checking out the media equipment and the lack of proper infrastructure within the classroom are some of the other reasons why teachers have refrained from using the media. Suresh pointed out that one of the reasons he never considered using the media is because it was too much of a "hot potato."

> The equipment is always kept under lock and key and it is loaned to the
> department after taking permission of the Management or the Principal. If the
> thing (equipment) gets damaged, you are responsible for it; you have to pay.
> Nobody wants to handle such a hot potato.

Suresh sees the use of the media as a source of financial burden on the teacher. He argued that he doesn't consider using newspaper articles in the classroom because they result in his spending money from his pocket. Employing clippings implies that students should have copies of the article, "but that involves spending money and there is no reimbursement from the management or the government. So who would like to dip into his own pocket?" Very often the television and VCR are "non functional" and the authorities concerned do not "bother to get them repaired." Unlike Radha, Suresh is reluctant to take his own equipment to college:

> I won't take my recorder to the college. If I do, then someone will say play it
> again, and someone else will say, "Let me borrow the cassette." When I am
> talking to people, they (the students) may damage the tape recorder.

Radha pointed out that although the college provides "television and other gadgets" they are always "under somebody's control" and checking them out "involves a long bureaucratic

procedure." And even when they have been checked out, they cannot be brought to any of the classrooms because they lack "the proper infrastructure." The classrooms are not equipped with sockets; as a result, students are forced to go to the auditorium to watch/listen to the program being played, and this often results in problems. "By the time I get the Management's permission and take them (the students) to another place, a lot of time is wasted. The students have a bad opinion of me because they think I am whiling away their time." Furthermore, getting the students to come to another building in order to watch a video is, in Radha's opinion, not an easy task.

> ….if I told my students, "Come to this department here; there is a television here
>
> and I would like to play the video cassette on group discussion," they would
>
> surely not come from that building to this building. They are not used to it; they
>
> are not trained that way. So half will come maybe and the other half won't turn
>
> up.

Impact of media on teacher's role

Some of the participants realize that the introduction of the media into the language classroom will bring about changes not only in the workload of the teachers, but also in the relationship between the teacher and the students. Three of the five participants felt that using the media often resulted in more work for the teacher. In the current set up, with the participants having taught the same set of textbooks for nearly ten years, it was no longer necessary for them to prepare for their classes. "Some teachers", argued Radha, "just walk into the class without preparing and start explaining, and because they have command over the language they keep saying something." She asserted that this would no longer be possible if one were planning to

use the media; for unlike the "traditional" teacher, the teacher who is planning to incorporate the media, an audiotape for example, has to invest a lot of time preparing for his/her class.

> She (the teacher) has to prepare and come to class; she cannot blindly walk into the class thinking that this is a poem that I have taught for ten years. She has to listen carefully to the tape, and think of the probable questions that these students may come out with and then think of ways to help them understand. ….She just can't put on the tape and go away, she has to sit along with them (the class) and listen to it (the tape).

Ashwini too believes that using the media will involve "more work" for the teacher. "She (the teacher) has to play it (the tape) for herself, make sure everything is right. She has to familiarize herself with the contents and prepare for what possible questions the students may ask."

According to Suresh, the preparation that is required for bringing the media into the classroom cannot be last minute ones. If a teacher is interested in using media, then everything must be carefully thought out far ahead of schedule. For this participant, this would involve determining "when and at what point in the academic year to show it (the tape) to them (the students); after or before which lesson and in what order." To be able to do this, the materials that one plans to use have to be "packaged and ready" before the academic year begins. Radha believes that in order to have everything ready, "the teacher has to work a little more than the traditional teacher. He has to keep abreast of the various cassettes available in the market and bring (select) the appropriate cassette for the class." Using the media therefore not only involves a considerable amount of planning, but also, according to Suresh, results in more physical labor for the teachers. "Teaching with audio visual aids involves more physical labor. You have to plug one thing into another, set up the whole thing, switch it on, and keep it going."

The participants are also aware of the fact that if they do incorporate the media into the classroom, it would not only mean more work, but also a change in their role as teachers. Suresh and Radha, two teachers who have attended quite a few refresher courses said that when teaching with the media, a teacher's role would become that of a "facilitator." For Suresh, becoming a facilitator implies that

You facilitate the learning process by providing them (the students) not with just the reading material, but also providing them with auditory and sensory inputs. A teacher is also a facilitator. A facilitator is one who gives that little extra punch, in a figurative sense. He generates interest in a subject or topic, gets them going, generates a kind of momentum, and once they get going, he doesn't need to do very much. Once the prescribed text is over, he will find that such students (whose learning has been facilitated) will want to go beyond that, to do things on their own.

For Radha, a "facilitator" is a helper.

…what I mean to say is, when I go into the classroom, if I am dealing with poetry, I just read out the poem and explain it to the students, word by word. The students don't use their inferring faculties at all. It's like giving them a banana, peeled, and they just eat it. But what a teacher should really do is to "facilitate", she should be like a trigger; let the students get the meanings of the difficult words themselves and also interpret the poem for themselves, using the teacher as a helper.

Radha believes that when the teacher takes on the role of a facilitator, then there is a dialog rather than a monolog in the classroom; there is "two way traffic", both teachers and students become "equally active." While Radha sees the facilitator as being as active as the students,

Suresh, on the other hand, sees himself as becoming as "passive" as the students. He believes that if he were to use the media in the classroom then he would "move into the passive mood. I will be as passively attentive as the students."

While Radha doesn't mind being a "facilitator", the remarks made by Suresh suggestes that he does. He refers to a facilitator, as being nothing more than a "glorified lab assistant" and in this role the teacher is not given much importance.

> You will move into the background and the audio visual materials will move to the foreground and will occupy the center stage….they acquire a life of their own and you become a person without a face operating the equipment. You will disappear from the radar screen of the students and the audio visual aids will occupy the vacated space.

Ashwini when asked how she would use the media, replied very candidly that if she were to use them she would do so only reluctantly. She said,

> ….the new teachers will like them (the media), but the old teachers have naturally got used to textbooks. So they will not appreciate them nor will they take to them happily. Nevertheless, if they have no choice, then they will have to do it. Given an option, they won't.

Radha endorsed Ashwini when she commented that

> ….older teachers might not like idea of using the media. ….From my experience I can say that quite a few teachers don't like to make any changes in their mode of teaching. Nobody likes to work harder for the pay that they are getting….They don't think that some changes have to come about. Even if changes have to come about, they won't do anything from their side, but let it be done by someone else.

She suggested that the use of the media should be taken up by the new teachers who are joining the profession. They should become the flag bearers of the media.

> Maybe the recent entrants will have to do it for their survival….if you prove yourself, you will continue in your profession. If you don't prove yourself, maybe you will be thrown out. Such teachers I am sure will have to be motivated and also more vulnerable to change.

When talking about the media, the participants often contradicted themselves. Although Suresh, Radha, and Ashwini felt that the media should be brought into the English language classroom, they argued that given the students' attitude to English, the media may not be welcome in the present context. The participants were able to see the usefulness of the media, and also visualize the kind of changes that they would have to make in their teaching practices in order to incorporate them. Considering the amount of changes that would need to be made and the resulting increase in workload, they suggest that the media should be used by new teachers.

Some of the beliefs expressed by the participants are similar to the principles laid down by the Communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. CLT began in Britain in the 1960s as a replacement for the earlier structural method, and today it is arguably the dominant paradigm in foreign and second language teaching. Unlike the earlier approaches, CLT is learner-centered and emphasizes communication in real-life situations. The role that the instructor plays is very different from the traditional teaching models. While in the traditional classroom, the teacher "controls" the learning process, in CLT the teacher functions more as a "facilitator", allowing students to be in charge of their own learning. Language is used for communication. The key issues associated with the principles of CLT are the following:

- Since the emphasis is on communication, there is less focus on explicit grammar instruction. In addition, "The teacher cannot impart all of it directly, rule by rule. Much (or most of it) must be acquired, i.e., figured out from input through experience with language" (Whitley, 1993, p. 139)

- Speaking practice should be as much like natural conversation as possible. Teachers should promote a supportive, non threatening classroom atmosphere to encourage communicative attempts (Horwitz, 1991). Good teaching implies providing the context for meaningful communication. (Savignon, 1983)

- Making errors is a natural part of the language learning process, because learners tend to pass through certain transitional stages or sequences in acquiring syntax (Van Patten, 1990).

Radha's, Ashwini's, and Laxmi's emphasis on meaning and communication suggests that they are advocating the CLT approach. Similarly, their beliefs that the best way to learn language is by creating an atmosphere which allows the students to talk without being unduly worried about grammatical mistakes resonates with this approach. Although the participants' beliefs suggest that they their approach to language teaching and learning is modern, their actual practices are not. The model which they adopt in the classroom is closer to the one which was prevalent between the 1940s and 1960s – the audio-lingual approach. This approach based on Skinner's behaviorist psychology believed that language learning was habit formation and laid particular emphasis on grammar rules and rote learning. The importance that all the five participants give to grammar and their insistence on correcting the students whenever they made mistakes indicate that when it comes to actual teaching practices they are more closer to the audio lingual method practiced during the early 1960s. This probably explains why although

participants like Suresh and Radha use words like "facilitator" to describe the teacher, in actual practice they still think of him as the source of all knowledge, as the "controller" of students.

Summary

The chapter presented, without extensive interpretation or analysis, the beliefs of the five participants about teaching English in India, and in the process provided an answer to research question 1. The beliefs that emerged were heterogeneous, and covered a broad range of topics concerning the various facets of college life – teaching, methods, students, curriculum, media, etc. The chapter did not attempt to interpret the beliefs of the participants, but merely described them using their own words. The next chapter attempts to show in what ways the various beliefs influence the teaching practices of the participants.

CHAPTER SIX

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the beliefs of the five participants; its focus was on describing and summarizing the beliefs of the teachers. These beliefs were varied, and they provided some insights to the answer to the first research question: What are ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching English in India? The present chapter attempts to determine how the beliefs of the participants actually play out in the language classroom and to examine whether the teaching practices that they adopt support or contradict their beliefs. The ten classroom observations made during the six-week period between September and November, 2002 and the interviews will be used to determine if the beliefs and teaching practices support each other, or whether there is a disconnect between what the participants say they do and what they actually do.

In order to achieve this, the chapter will take each category of beliefs identified in Chapter 5 and analyze it in relation to other categories of beliefs. In other words, the attempt here will be to examine if the various beliefs complement one another and if they do not, how the contradictions are resolved. Do some beliefs emerge as being more dominant than others, and if so, how do we determine their relative dominance? The result of the findings presented in this chapter will help answer research question two: How do teachers' existing beliefs impact media use in the language classroom?

<u>Beliefs and practices</u>

In the preceding chapter, the teachers expressed a variety of beliefs relating to their role vis a vis the curriculum, the students, the teaching of language, media, etc. As will be made clear below, some of these beliefs did not translate into action, while a few were in consonance with what they did in the classroom. The dissonance between thought and action will be explored toward the end of the chapter; a variety of factors, circumstantial, and administrative, played a role.

<u>Completing the syllabus</u>

This was one belief where there was no disconnect between what the participants said and their teaching practices. It was argued in Chapter 5 that the participants felt constantly pressured by the "first class citizens" of the college to complete their syllabus by mid December. Time was depicted as a precious, but rare commodity which the language teacher didn't have too much of. The observations showed that subject teachers and students often ate into what little time the "second class" citizen had to "cover" the syllabus.

Even during the six months allocated for the English syllabus, the subject classes take precedence, often spilling over into the language periods and allowing the language teacher less than the fifty minutes of class time. Of the ten language classes that I observed, eight started late; seven of them because the subject teacher had overextended himself – in one case, a physics teacher taught for an extra fifteen minutes. While Radha and I stood outside the classroom watching the teacher derive a formula, Radha commented that waiting was something all language teachers had to "learn to put up with." The waiting period varied between 5 and 15 minutes.

Students too played a role in denying the teachers the 50 minutes of teaching time. I observed two classes held during the first hour (9: 00 a.m.), and in both cases the teachers, Ashwini and Suresh, were forced to begin the class late. When Suresh walked into his classroom on 9-25-02, he found no students in class. He asked me to accompany him to the entrance of the building, and while we stood talking, he peeped through the classroom window, every now and then, to see if students had arrived. At 9: 15, fifteen minutes after the scheduled time of class, we returned to the classroom and Suresh began to teach the 8 students (out of a possible 67) present. He did not ask for an explanation as to why they were late, and the students did not volunteer any information.

Similarly, when Ashwini walked into her classroom at 9: 00 A. M. on 10-7-02, she found only 7 of the 60 odd students seated at their desks. She informed the students that she would wait for "some more of their friends" to arrive before she started the new lesson. She had to wait for another five minutes before a few more students walked in. Although the English classes invariably began late, the participants always made it a point to finish on time. As soon as the bell rang, the teacher took attendance and walked out; at no time did I find a "subject" teacher standing outside the classroom waiting to get in.

One of the observations made by the participants was that in order to complete the syllabus on time they often had to "rush" through the lessons. Suresh, for example, commented:

> We all try to complete the syllabus, even if we have to rush through it, because
> this way the students have time to revise at their own leisure. The teachers feel
> they have done their job once they have completed (the syllabus), and then
> students need not attend any more classes.

The classroom observations demonstrated just how much the participants rushed things. The length of each prose lesson varied between four and five pages, and the prescribed poems were no more than one or two pages. In the ten classes I observed, the 5 participants managed to complete a lesson in approximately 40 minutes, on nine occasions. Suresh was unable to complete a twenty-page lesson included in the non-detailed text.

The manner in which the participants achieved this was different. Suresh, Janaki, and Laxmi read the text aloud and explained the contents to the students. Radha and Ashwini, on the other hand, either read the text aloud themselves, or had the students read it aloud, and every now and then explained the meanings of difficult words and summarized the content. This was followed by comprehension questions. Their methods of questioning ranged from posing a question to the class in general, without targeting a specific student, to directing questions at individual students. In both cases, however, the participant did not spend too much time eliciting responses; if the student was unable to respond, the teacher quickly provided the answer.

The participants did not give assignments to determine if the students had understood the lesson or not. In fact, the only assignment given in the ten classes I observed was one that had no relevance to the lesson itself. It was a prose lesson taught by Radha in which a "sapphire" ring was mentioned. After explaining to the students that a "sapphire" was a precious stone, she then asked them if they knew what the other precious stones were. When the students said "No, Madam", Radha made it their assignment – finding out what the other precious stones were. Completing a new lesson every day was very important for the participants. They seldom reviewed what they had done in the previous class; and on the two occasions that they did, the students were unable to answer the questions posed by the teachers. This is what happened in one of Ashwini's classes.

Ashwini informs the 7 students who are present at 9: 00 o'clock that she is going to be doing poetry and asks them if they have brought their textbooks. Only two students have. She then asks the students to "share the books". Since there are not too many students in class, she tells them that it would be a good idea to wait for a few more minutes "for their friends" to arrive. While they are waiting, she begins to talk about the previous poem that they have done – "Sonnet to Science" by Poe. She asks a few questions: "What does the poet say about science?" "How does he feel about science?" When the students don't answer, she begins to talk about the poem that she is going to be doing today: "The Express" by Stephen Spender. Ashwini tells them that the poem is going to be about a train. She asks the students to "describe what it is like when a train leaves the platform."

Even though her students were unable to answer questions about a poem that they had already done, it didn't seem to upset Ashwini. Instead of reviewing the poem, she proceeded to teach the new one. It was only after she had completed "The Express" that she returned to "Sonnet to Science" towards the end of the class. When she posed the same questions again, this is what transpired:

Ashwini goes back to the poem (The Express) and summarizes it again. She asks if there are any questions and the students say, "No, Madam". She then asks the question which she had asked at the beginning of the class: "What does the poet think of science in 'Sonnet to Science'?" She picks on one student, and he responds by saying, "I was absent, Madam." Ashwini then answers the question herself: "Science is a killer. It kills the imagination." She then quickly proceeds to take the attendance.

The other teacher who raised questions about an earlier lesson that she had done was Radha. The students were unable to answer her as well; but unlike Ashwini, Radha first reviewed the old poem before moving on to the new one. Like Ashwini, Radha too successfully completed the new poem in the same class.

As all the participants repeatedly pointed out, their aim is to complete the syllabus in the short time given to them. Starting and finishing a lesson on the same day seems to be one way of doing it. Based on what I saw during the observations, for these participants finishing a lesson, does not necessarily imply "comprehension" on the part of the students. In this context, completing a lesson means reading a lesson aloud and explaining it, and this is something that all participants do.

Discipline in the classroom

Another theme all participants agreed on was the importance of maintaining discipline in the classroom. Classroom observations, however, showed that discipline was a problem. Students walked into the classroom as and when they pleased, talked among themselves when the lecture was going on, seldom brought their textbooks with them, hardly ever took notes, and rarely answered questions posed by the teachers.

Janaki had stated that she "demanded silence" from her students, but as the following extract shows, there was little evidence of it in her classroom.

10: 50: Janaki begins to read the poem, "Sonnet to Science" by Edgar Allen Poe. Students (25) share the three books available. While she is reading, those with textbooks look into theirs, and those that don't have a textbook, talk among themselves. This doesn't seem to upset the teacher. She continues to read the text.

After reading the poem, the teacher looks up from the book, looks at the class and says, "I'll read it once again." As she is reading, five more students walk into the classroom. The teacher stops, and asks them if they have brought their poetry textbooks, and they reply, "No, Madam." They sit in various corners of the room and the teacher begins to read the poem again.

It was not only the talking that went unchecked, but a lot of other things as well. In Suresh's class, three out of the seven students who were present kept themselves busy by copying a physics problem from the blackboard. Although Suresh noted that they were frequently looking at the blackboard and copying things, he did not object. This suggests that as long as the students remained silent and allowed him to complete the task on hand; he was willing to give them the freedom to do what they wanted. Laxmi had maintained that she didn't permit her students to enter the classroom if they were more than ten minutes late. This practice, however, was seldom followed. In one of the classes, she allowed a student to walk in 35 minutes after the class had begun. What I found was that the teachers for most part allowed students to walk in whenever they pleased; they were seldom questioned or punished for being late. Suresh allowed 23 students to walk in ten minutes before the class ended. The standard practice for the student was to stand near the door and ask, "May I come in Madam/Sir?" and the teacher generally waved him in. On one occasion Ashwini told a student who walked in forty minutes late that he would "not get attendance" for the day. But later, when she took attendance, she marked him present.

This lack of discipline was very different from what I saw happening in the "subject" classes. While waiting with Radha and Janaki for the science teachers to complete their lessons, I caught a glimpse of what went on in a physics and math class. (It was fairly easy to observe what

went on because most teachers in the college seldom closed the door when they taught. Since each classroom had only two fans for the sixty odd students, perhaps the teachers thought it wise to leave the doors open to let fresh air in.) The first big difference that I noted was that the classroom was packed with students; there were no empty desks. Unlike in the English classes, each student had a notebook open in front of him and he could be seen busily copying down whatever the teacher was writing on the blackboard. I did not see students talking among themselves; the only sound that came from the classroom was the teacher's voice. In sharp contrast to this, the same students when they sat in their English classes, very few had a notebook, or even a textbook, in front of them.

Radha was the only participant I observed who did not have students walking in late for class, and unlike in the other classes, there was not much talking among the students. In her two classes, she had 30 and 34 students present from the beginning; more than in any of the other classes: Ashwini: 23, 17; Janaki: 25, 22; Laxmi: 14, 20; Suresh: 31, 7. Radha maintained discipline in class by making different students read short excerpts from the available texts. She also posed a lot of questions, and kept at the students till they were able to provide the one-word answer that she was looking for.

Discipline for the participants meant having "control" over the students, but as the numerous examples showed, with the exception of Radha, the other teachers had little control or no control over what happened in the classroom. The students walked in whenever they pleased, talked among themselves, took down notes unrelated to the class that they were sitting in, and seldom answered questions asked by the teacher. The teachers' beliefs about "discipline" are not supported by their classroom practices. What was "disciplined" about the class, however, was the approach of the teachers. Despite the lack of enthusiasm from the students, despite the several

distractions, the teachers were successful in completing the lesson they set out to teach. It was the teachers, not the students who remained disciplined in order to achieve their ultimate goal – to complete the lesson they set out teach. Is there a connection between these beliefs? Sturtevant (1996) argued that although an individual may hold several beliefs about a specific topic, not all are equally strong; some are more important to the individual than others. It seems likely in the present case, the participants' beliefs about completing the syllabus are much stronger than their beliefs about maintaining discipline.

Beliefs about morals and connecting literature to life

Even though four out of the five participants had stressed the importance of teaching "morals" to the students, I found no instance of it in my observations. There was a total disconnect between this belief and their classroom practices. The participants had several occasions in every class that I observed to play the role of the "guide," but they chose not to. The constant whispering among students, the late entrances, and the other examples already discussed in this chapter provided ideal opportunities for the participants to become a "surrogate parent." They did not seize the moment. I would like to argue that this belief, similar to "discipline" was not their dominant belief. Although the participants had many chances to teach students right from wrong, they chose not to because had they done so it would have cut into their time to complete the syllabus – and time, as we saw earlier, is not a commodity that teachers have enough of.

Another belief which all participants said they felt strongly about was the importance of linking the text to real life. Radha, Laxmi, and Ashwini had advocated the use of such connections for two reasons – to make students "think" and "talk." But once again there was

little evidence of this in the observations. This is not to say that the participants failed to make connections between the text and the students' world; they did. These connections, however, for most part, were made in passing; the links did not lead to a discussion or debate. A connection that the participants often succeeded in making was to link the author to a lesson which the students had studied the previous year. The following extract shows how Laxmi made a connection between this year's lesson by Pearl S. Buck and last year's lesson.

> There are 13 students seated at their desks as the teacher enters the classroom. She stands behind her desk on the podium and informs them that they are going to read a short story by Pearl S. Buck, "The Refugees". The teacher then asks the students if they remember Pearl S. Buck, and a few students reply, "Yes, teacher." When asked how they remember, a student says, "We had one lesson last year." When the teacher asks what the lesson was, the students are unable to respond. She waits for a few seconds before responding, "The Good Earth, isn't it?" The students all nod and say, "Yes, madam".

But the connection served no purpose; the students were not asked to summarize the previous year's lesson, or compare it with this year's story. It was merely to ascertain if they still remembered the names of the authors that they had read in their previous year.

Another type of connection made was between the text and the world outside the classroom. Suresh, for example, was able to do this in both the classes that I observed. While teaching the Tolstoy story, Suresh succeeded in linking the ugly prison fight that is described and the Sylvester Stallone movie "Lockup" that had been aired on cable the week before. In the second class, Suresh tried to make a connection between "casteism" (rigid traditional social

separation practiced among Hindus) as it was practiced in the old days and the manner in which it is being practiced now. In both cases, however, mention of the link did not lead to a discussion.

> Suresh then begins to read aloud the first paragraph. He explains how casteism was part of the puranas (ancient writings). He argues that the ancient scriptures separated people in terms of caste in order to determine the profession of individuals and for no other reason. From the text he jumps to what life in India is like now. He argues that although "casteism" is illegal, it still exists in India. It exists not only among the Hindus, but even among the Christians and the Muslims– at least in the Indian version of Christianity and Islam. A Reddy Christian will not marry a dalit (backward class) Christian.

The students merely listened while Suresh talked. Although Suresh had stated in his interview that he enjoyed making connections between life and literature, perhaps the real reason that he did so was because they provided opportunities for him to talk. As he pointed out later on, "My biggest aim is to get rid of my verbal diarrhea. I love to listen to my own voice, to listen to the words trip over each other to get out, and I feel good having had my say."

The only connection that resulted in a discussion of sorts occurred in Radha's class. She was teaching a poem about trees (*On Killing a Tree* by Gieve Patel) to Botany students. The following exchange took place towards the end of the class.

> Radha asks: "How do you find out the age of a tree? Come on you are science students you should be able to answer this question." One student starts to answer, then says in the local langauge, "I cannot explain in English. I will tell in …." The teacher says in English, "No, then how will you learn your English?" Then one of

the students says: "From the bark". The teacher says, "Yes, from the bark" and goes on to talk about a 108 year old tree in a town nearby.

The student's answer did not lead to a discussion. It merely gave Radha an opportunity to talk about the old tree. The students, like in Suresh's class, remained silent spectators.

Although there were attempts to link literature to life, they merely provided the participants an outlet to display their scholarship. The links enabled them to move out of the textbook, but the participants didn't use them to motivate students to talk – which is what they claimed they did in the interviews. Once again there was a disconnect between what they claimed they did, and what they actually did in the language classroom.

Beliefs about language learning

Nowhere was the disconnect between the teachers' stated beliefs and their teaching practices more apparent than in the area of language learning. For Ashwini, Laxmi, and Radha, learning a language implied having the ability to converse in the language. In the case of these three participants, one of the primary functions of the teacher is to provide opportunities for students to use English in the classroom. But again, there was little evidence of this in the classes that I observed. For the most part, the three participants walked into the classroom, spent whatever time available explaining the lesson, before moving on to the next one. Although the three teachers stated that the best way for students to learn a language was by talking, within the confines of the classroom they provided their students with little or no opportunity to talk. Their lessons were more of a monolog than a dialogue.

The type of questions the three participants posed didn't provide the students an opportunity to freely express themselves. Laxmi, for example, asked a lot of questions that

required one-word answers: "What does disillusionment mean?", "What was very far?" Like the other participants, she sometimes ended a sentence with a rising intonation expecting the students to fill in the blanks: "The story takes place in….." These comprehension questions were not directed at individual students, and on the few occasions that the students answered, they resulted one-word answers. In one of her classes, Laxmi insisted that the students answer in complete sentences. She added, "You can answer in Telugu if you want." While talking about her beliefs on language learning, however, she had argued that a teacher must ensure that students use the language that they are trying to acquire.

Sometimes, the participants didn't give the students enough time to provide even the one word answer. Neither Ashwini nor Laxmi waited long for an answer. If the students failed to respond immediately, the participants provided the answers themselves. Though Radha directed her questions at specific students, there was little attempt to get them to use English to talk about general things. She too asked factual questions which demanded one-word answers, which she expanded on.

Janaki, on the other hand, had insisted that for any language learning to take place, the focus should be on "reading" and "writing", yet there was very little focus on either. In her classes, the students were never asked to read silently and answer questions, nor were they given any assignments in which they could display their writing skills. In her interviews she had argued that the writing skill was the most important skill to be acquired by students because "they (the students) have to give (take) examinations where they have to write essays and compositions." In this college, however, she has "confined" herself to explanation of the text because "these boys are not interested" in English. "They don't write; they don't listen."

The only person whose teaching practices supported his beliefs was Suresh. He had argued that students could "pick up the language nuances and patterns" by "listening" to the teacher: "The best way of learning a language is to internalize what you have taken in, keeping your ears close to the ground, picking up the speech patterns and the grammar rules without knowing what they are." And this is exactly what his students did in the classroom. They listened to him; he provided them with little or no opportunity to talk.

Once again, it is clear that there is a disconnect between the teachers' beliefs about language learning and their classroom practices. There was little opportunity for dialog within the classroom, and discussion was practically absent—the teachers did all the talking.

Beliefs about methods

Although each participant argued that he/she had his/her own unique style of teaching, the teaching practices of these individuals, in fact, shared certain common features. Some of the shared practices included providing background information about the author, the "age" (era) in which he/she lived, reading the text aloud, explanation of the stanza/paragraph in simple language, and providing mother tongue equivalents, whenever necessary. This section will briefly discuss how these various practices manifested themselves in the context of the classroom and describe the adaptations the participants made in order to use them.

The participants stated that at the beginning of each lesson they provided "background information" about the author and the era in which he/she lived. This, as it turned out, consisted of nothing more than reading a paragraph from the textbook. At the end of every lesson, the editors had included a paragraph containing a few biographical details of the author and the age

in which he/she lived. When Laxmi taught the lesson "The Refugees" by Pearl S. Buck on 9-27-03, she read the following paragraph contained in the text.

> Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973) is a popular American writer. She grew up in China and many of her novels and stories are about life in China. The most famous of her novels is The Good Earth. In 1938, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. While working in China as a missionary she wrote several stories to promote understanding between the East and the West.

Similarly Radha, who taught the poem "On killing a tree," read the following paragraph included at the end of the lesson.

> Gieve Patel (b. 1940) works as a doctor in Bombay and has published two volumes of poetry. His early poems register his sympathies with the oppressed and the underdog in society. His poetry is of a distinctive and individual character. Many of his poems reveal, with remarkable evocative power, the poet's anxiety and bitterness regarding human intelligence. Patel's perception is influenced by his scientific (medical) career which is not only the source of his imagery and metaphor, but also enables him to portray details with clinical precision.

In the classes I observed, each participant began by reading these brief biographical sketches every time he/she started a new lesson. The paragraph was usually read very quickly and the content was never discussed. The participants did not provide a summary, nor did they discuss the difficult vocabulary items. For example, Radha's paragraph on Patel contained words like "evocative", "clinical precision", and "perception," but they were never taken up for discussion. Radha did not volunteer any information about the words, and the students did not ask her what

they meant. Although every participant read the biographical sketch of the author, none of them used the material to explain the text. Once the material had been read aloud, it was never referred to again. When asked why they felt compelled to read the information about the author, Janaki replied that it was because it was part of the text. Although there were never any questions in the final exam about an author's life, she nevertheless felt obligated to read it.

The teaching practices that the participants actually adopted in the classroom were at times different from the ones that they described in the interviews. For example, they had claimed that the usual technique for teaching a prose lesson was the following: reading of a paragraph by teacher/student, explanation of difficult vocabulary items, and providing the "gist" of the paragraph. Janaki alone followed this method; the others evolved their own. Radha, for example, made her students take turns in reading aloud an entire prose lesson (The Topaz Cufflinks Mystery). The reading took ten minutes and though during this period she corrected some of the words that the students mispronounced, the content of the paragraphs was never discussed. While a student read, she requested the others to underline the difficult words so they could be taken up for discussion later. When the students had completed reading the lesson, Radha asked them only one question: "What is the story about?" When the students were unable to answer the question, Radha read aloud the entire lesson again, and posed a series of questions which she herself answered:

> What is the story about? A wife and a husband have a bet. What is the bet
> about?....Who proves what to whom? Why did the cop stop? What did the
> husband say? Why didn't the cop believe the husband? What happens to a
> shortsighted person? In the end, what happens to the cop?

Radha provided a summary of the entire lesson in the form of questions and answers and at no time in the course of this particular lesson did she attempt to explain the details.

Ashwini and Suresh followed a similar pattern. When he was teaching the lesson by Tolstoy (God sees the truth, but waits) Suresh read several paragraphs before giving an explanation. In Ashwini's class, the students were made to read several paragraphs before she explained the contents. Janaki, was the only one who followed the policy of reading a stanza/paragraph and explaining it before moving on.

Also, while talking about the difference between prose and poetry, Radha had maintained that she made students read a poem aloud only after she had completed it.

> I then read the poem aloud. I read it again because some students may not have been paying attention the first time. The second time I read it, the students know how to pronounce the various words. I then read individual stanzas and then explain their meaning stanza by stanza. I ask the students to underline the similes, metaphors and we also talk about the rhyme scheme. Once I have finished all the stanzas, I read the poem again and give the overall meaning, show them how the various stanzas are related to one another. When I have finished explaining I ask the students to read the poem aloud.

But this method was not followed in her poetry class that I observed. Radha read the poem once and then asked a student to read the first stanza. When the student had finished reading it, she provided the meanings of the difficult words and then went on to explain the stanza. She then asked another student to read the next stanza and then proceeded to follow the same routine for the rest of the poem.

In addition to explanation, the participants reported in the interviews that they often resorted to translation to get the meaning across to the students. In the ten classes, Radha was the only teacher who translated English words into the local language. While teaching the poem by Gieve Patel, she translated "heal", "cave", and "withering".

The teaching practices which the participants claimed they used and the ones that they actually used in the classroom though somewhat different did bear some similarity. Unlike some of the beliefs described in this chapter there was not a total disconnect between their beliefs and their practices.

Beliefs about students

As mentioned earlier, many of the participants' beliefs regarding the students were often determined through their constant interaction with them. Their attitude towards their students was somewhat ambivalent; the three senior teachers stated that they believed that the students' attitude towards English had changed dramatically over the years. They felt that in recent years it had become very positive, and as a result the students attending classes had far superior linguistic skills than those who had attended college over ten years ago. Commenting on this "qualitative" change Suresh said:

> There is a change in the way students are looking at English--they are more
> responsive, more attentive, and if the English teacher can deliver the goods, they
> will listen. There is a realization among young people that linguistic competence
> is desirable, with many of them doing tests like the TOEFL; they are looking for
> the right kind of training. Now we have at least 25-30 percent attendance in class.

Suresh also maintained that, when compared to the students of ten years ago, the present day students were linguistically superior. Based on the observations, it would be difficult to comment on the students' linguistic skills for most merely provided one-word answers. When questions requiring a lengthy answer were asked, students left them unanswered.

Ashwini begins to talk about the poem she is going to be doing today: "The Express" by Stephen Spender. Ashwini tells them that the poem is going to be about a train. She asks the students to "describe what it is like when a train leaves the platform." She waits patiently for students to answer, but no student willingly comes up with one. She picks on one student to answer the question. She doesn't call him by name, merely says, "You." The student gets up and says that he will answer the question in his mother tongue, Ashwini says, "No." The student says in his mother tongue he can write in English, but finds it difficult to talk in English. Ashwini argues that if the student knows how to write in English, she should certainly know how to talk. "The only way to improve your speech is by talking", she says. She tells the student not to be afraid of talking. The student says, "Yes, Madam" and sits down.

The participants also strongly believed that the students did not take the subject seriously, and there was a lot of evidence to corroborate this. During the observations, I found that most students absented themselves from the English classes. The classes that I observed had an enrolment of 65 to 70 students, and as described earlier, in most cases, less than half the students were present. Often students walked in late, or came in just before attendance was called.

Not only did students show their indifference to English by not turning up for the classes, they also demonstrated it by walking out of the classes. As I had indicated earlier, language

teachers had to frequently wait outside the classroom for the science teachers to complete their lesson. These classrooms were invariably full, and when the subject class ended and the teacher walked out of the classroom, many of the students walked out along with him. Though these students knew that their next class was English and saw the English teacher waiting outside, many chose to walk past him/her without an apology. This is not an uncommon experience for the participants; Suresh commented:

> What does make me feel bad is when the students all troop out in front of me, while I am waiting there outside the class. The ones who are interested stay inside waiting for my class, but many of them just walk past me after their subject class is over. That is hard to take.

When the language teacher walks in, the classroom, which two minutes earlier looked packed with students, looks relatively empty.

While the students who absented themselves from classes showed their indifference towards the subject in one way, those that attended classes demonstrated their apathy in other ways. The participants pointed out that in addition to walking in late to class, the students indicated their indifference to English by not bringing their textbooks. The observations supported the participants' reports. Textbooks in all these classes "were invisible entities"; not many students brought them to class. In Janaki's class for example, there were only six textbooks among the twenty-five students present; similarly there were only three among the fourteen students who attended Laxmi's class. There were no textbooks among the seven students present in Suresh's class. The participants didn't take umbrage at the fact that students failed to bring their textbooks. Only on two occasions did the teacher ask why the students had failed to bring

the textbook. The lack of textbooks, however, did not stop the participants from teaching the lesson. They read the text aloud and explained.

Another manner in which the students showed their indifference was the considerable amount of talking that they did while the teacher was lecturing. It was common for students sitting in the back of the classroom, and especially those without textbooks, to talk among themselves. Even though the participants looked in their direction every now and then, they did not stop talking. It was only Janaki who stopped two students from talking. "Last one, what are you doing?"

Suresh maintained that for most students, language classes were "fun filled hours" where students made a teacher's life "miserable" by asking the teacher "stupid questions." There was nothing in the observation to lend any credence to this belief. While it is true that not many students came to their English class, what one was struck by was the lack of interaction between the students and the teacher. The students, for most part, were performing one of the following tasks: listening to the teacher, talking among themselves, or providing one word answers to the questions asked by the teacher. There were hardly any questions, "stupid" or otherwise, being asked by the students themselves. In all ten classes, only one question was raised by a student. It happened in Janaki's class and the question was, "What is the meaning of albeit, Madam?" The word had occurred in the poem that she was teaching. The two other occasions when students spoke up voluntarily, without having the teacher to goad them, was to inform the teacher concerned that his/her "time" was up and that the bell had rung.

Another observation the participants made as further proof of students' indifference to English was the fact that they seldom did their assignments. The classroom observations can neither substantiate nor disprove this claim as none of the participants, with the exception of

Radha, gave any assignments to the students. It is not clear whether the students turned in the assignment or not, as it was given in the last class I observed.

Seldom answering questions posed by the teacher was another way of showing their lack of interest in the subject. Students kept silent when teachers asked questions. It was only when a teacher like Radha, who identified the student and waited patiently for him to answer, that they came up with the required one word answers. Those like Laxmi who sometimes identified students to answer questions, but didn't have the patience to wait, seldom received even the one word answer.

The observations also failed to throw any light on the importance of "guides" in a student's life. There were no notes present in the classroom and no teacher other than Radha talked about them. While reviewing the poem "Laugh and be merry", she informed the students that if they took notes while listening to her, they wouldn't have to depend on "bazaar guides."

Though the teachers' beliefs about the students are largely negative, there is a connection between the way they perceive them and the manner in which the students actually behaved in the language classroom. Among the beliefs discussed, only two did not have a "disconnect": those pertaining to beliefs about "completing the syllabus" and beliefs about "students"; and to a lesser extent beliefs related to "methods."

Findings

The literature on belief studies suggests that beliefs acquired early in ones life remained "status quo" (Florio-Ruane & Lensiere, 1990). Lortie (1975) maintained that many of the beliefs acquired during the apprenticeship of observation period seldom changed, even when confronted with contradictory evidence. The data from this study supports this. For example, some of the

beliefs that the participants talked about, but never acted on, were acquired during the apprenticeship of observation phase. Radha, for instance, talked about linking literature to life and using this link to make students think and talk. These beliefs are similar to those of the teacher who influenced Radha. Likewise, Suresh's beliefs about connecting a text to other texts of literature and using humor to make classes interesting are similar to those his teacher used.

Although the beliefs acquired during the apprenticeship of observation stage influenced the participants' beliefs about teaching, they did not determine what the teacher did in the classroom. This finding is rather different from those of Bird and Anderson (1993) and Freeman (1996). In his study, Freeman concluded that "the memories of instruction gained through their 'apprenticeship of observation' function as *de facto* guides for teachers as they approach what they do in the classroom" (p. 3). In my study, however, the early-acquired beliefs of the participants did not determine their classroom practices. It has been repeatedly pointed out in this chapter that there was a "disconnect" between the participants' beliefs and their teaching methods. This "disconnect", however, did not exist for all beliefs. When it came to their beliefs about "completing the syllabus", "students", and to some extent "methodology", the teaching practices supported their beliefs. But when it came to linking literature to life and using it to make students think and talk, the classroom practices did not support the belief. The question that arises is why is it that there was a mismatch between beliefs and teaching practices in the some cases and not in others? Does a disconnect between beliefs and practices imply that those stated beliefs are not the participants' actual beliefs? I would argue that they are the participants' beliefs, however, they are not their dominant beliefs. Linde (1980) and Nisbett and Ross (1980) argued that the numerous beliefs that an individual has about a specific topic do not operate or exist in isolation. All beliefs, are in fact, interrelated to each other. The various beliefs that an

individual holds become a part of his/her "belief system", and in this system according to Sturtevant (1996), not all beliefs have the same value, some emerge more dominant than others. The dominant belief of the five participants in this study is syllabus completion; this, coupled with their beliefs about the students determines the practices they adopt in the language classroom.

Why didn't the early beliefs become the dominant beliefs? It is my contention that the context, in this case, the institution, did not allow it. This supports Richards and Lockhart's (1994) assertion that very often, institutional factors compel teachers to alter, if not abandon their expressed beliefs. Yim (1993) found that although ESL teachers in Singapore stated that they believed in communicative language teaching, the practices that they adopted in the classroom did not support their belief. Yim's argument for this mismatch was that the exam-based system of education in Singapore forced teachers to abandon their beliefs. The system that is followed in India is very similar to that followed in Singapore, and this explains why the completion of the syllabus emerged as the dominant theme.

The participants believe quite strongly that as teachers it is their job to complete the syllabus in the quickest time possible. This belief compels them to adopt in the language classroom, practices which go against their other beliefs, such as language is communication, literature should be related to life, etc. Although their other beliefs are at odds with the dominant or central belief, the participants do not abandon them altogether. Posner, Strike, Hewson, and Hertzog (1982) claimed that individuals either "assimilated" or "accommodated" information into their belief systems. When new information can be easily fitted into the existing beliefs, it is called "assimilation"; and when new information compels one to reorganize existing beliefs, it is called "accommodation." In my estimation, the participants instead of abandoning/discarding

their non-dominant beliefs, attempt to integrate some aspects/elements of these beliefs into their teaching practices. In other words, a non-dominant belief is not assimilated in its entirety. Certain aspects of it, those that don't contradict the dominant beliefs, are reflected in the teaching practices. For example, one of the beliefs of the participants was that a teacher must link literature to life in order to make students "think" and "talk." But the classroom observations showed that although the participants made a connection between literature and life, they did not necessarily use these connections for the purpose of making students think or talk. Though these connections were made very quickly in passing, they were nevertheless made. The participants were unwilling to abandon their belief about literature and life totally.

What emerges is that even though each of the participants had expressed clear beliefs about how language should be taught, and what effective teaching was, or even what the role of a teacher was, they seemed to feel constrained by the circumstances of their classrooms, their ideas about administrative and student expectations. Their beliefs about student expectations, for instance, constrained the expression of their ideas about teaching. This finding too supports Yim's findings from the Singapore study.

<u>Implications for media use</u>

Given the fact that the main aim of the participants is to complete the syllabus as quickly as possible, it is not surprising that none of them used media during the observation period. Although the participants made a case for using the media, it is hard to see how these individuals would actually use them in the classroom, for they go against many of the beliefs they have about teaching. In the next few paragraphs, I will briefly sketch how using the media will go against many of the participants' beliefs.

Status

"Elevated" and "superior" are two of the adjectives used by the participants to describe their status both within and outside the classroom. The teachers are in an "elevated" position because they are the only source of information; they are the "givers" and the students the "takers." In such an environment the teacher always remains the focus of attention, for what he/she says is the "gospel truth." If the media are introduced in this context, then the teacher will have to compete with them for the attention of his/her students; and this is something that the teachers would resist. As Suresh pointed out, if the media were introduced, then the teacher would be reduced to a "glorified lab assistant"; he would recede into the "background", while the media moved into the "foreground." It is because of this that two participants argue that there is no need for the media as teachers can do whatever the media can – they can entertain and teach. Teachers after all, in Suresh's estimation are "infotainers."

Completing the syllabus

Since the main aim of the participants is to complete the syllabus as quickly as possible, it is very unlikely that the media will be welcomed in such a context. They will be seen as a hindrance; employing the media will be a "waste of time" for both students and teachers, coming in the way of the real work of getting the syllabus over with.

Discipline

The participants believe the teacher must have "control" over his/her students. Although there was little evidence of this during the observation period, the classrooms remained relatively quiet, which enabled the teachers to do what they planned to. True, students talked among

themselves, but it was usually in whispers and did not disrupt the class. Furthermore, since the teachers confined themselves to the text, they had control over what was being said in the classroom. They never veered from the lesson. If the media were brought into the classroom, then the teacher would no longer be in control of the content and this might result in the students asking the "stupid questions" that Suresh was afraid of.

Methods

The participants indicated one of the advantages of teaching the same "boring" texts repeatedly is that there is no need for them to "prepare" for their classes. All they need to do is to walk into the classroom and "talk." Introduction of the media would imply a tremendous increase in the workload of the teacher: finding out what materials are available in the market, listening to/watching the tapes, preparing for possible questions, planning when to use the materials, etc. It seems unlikely that a teacher would be willing to do so much additional work for a group of students who are not interested in the subject. As Radha pointed out, why should they put in more work for the same pay?

Students

A theme that the participants harped on was the negative attitude that the students displayed towards English. When questioned what they needed in order to get them to use the media in the classroom, some of the participants asked for a Refresher Course which would provide hands-on training with the various media. Others wanted better infrastructure and the less bureaucratic procedures for borrowing equipment. Radha and Suresh wanted the class size to be reduced. But how these will bring about a change in the students outlook towards English is

not clear. To successfully use the media in the classroom, teachers need to address the beliefs of students. Otherwise, no amount of training, hands on, or otherwise is likely to result in the successful implementation of the media in the classroom.

The section showed how the present beliefs of the teachers hinder, rather than promote the use of media in the language classroom. What impact this will have on Government policy regarding the integration of the media will be discussed in the next section.

Implications for Government policy

1. Involvement of teachers: The Government of India has been attempting to promote the use of media in education since the country became independent in 1947. The decisions that it has taken in this matter have always been unilateral. Policies have been formulated top down by politicians and bureaucrats with little regard to how they might actually play out in the classrooms. Teachers have been told to use the media, and as Schrum (1995) pointed out "if change is forced or mandated from administration, the result may be tenuous acceptance, without real change" (p. 85). This is largely what has happened in the Indian context. In order to successfully implement its policies, the government needs to sit down with teachers and have a dialog on how the media can be integrated into their teaching practices. They need to identify the factors that promote and hinder the use of media in the current classroom setup. Unless teachers are involved both in policy formulation and implementation on the ground, media are unlikely to make inroads into the school setting.

2. Involvement of students and college administration: In addition to talking to the teachers, policy makers also need to talk to the students for whom these various programs are meant. Understanding how student expectations were met (or not), and how the language courses fitted into their career or future education plans would lead to the development of more realistic policy and curriculum (both content and delivery mechanism) framing. Interactions with administrators would also be helpful, to ensure that they motivate teachers to use the media on a regular basis. The government needs to determine if students are willing to learn from the media; whether the media are considered an alternate source of learning. They also need to encourage administrators to promote the use of media in the classroom. It is not enough to merely provide free television sets as it is doing now, the government needs to make the administrators accountable as to what happens in the classroom, and of course, to help create the environment that encourages teachers to actually make use of such facilities.

3. Making media relevant to the syllabus: Since the syllabus determines what teachers do in the classroom, the government can get the teachers and students interested in the media by making programs relevant to the syllabus. For instance, the government could instruct the various Educational Media Research Centres to make programs relevant to the state in which it is situated. Furthermore, it should make the media an integral part of the students' final exam. If questions regarding some of the programs are included in the final exam, then it is very likely that students, teachers, and administrators will begin to take media seriously. Questions relating to the content of the programs may also succeed in weaning the students away from the ubiquitous "bazaar notes."

4. Build the teacher into the programs: A fear that teachers have is that if the media are brought into the classroom, then they (the teachers) will have to take a back seat. Teachers must understand—and finally believe—that they are integral to the learning process, the media are only an item in their pedagogical toolkit. Therefore, the classroom teacher must be made an integral part of the program. The educational television programs as they are designed now have the "expert" talking directly to his audience; the classroom teacher has no role to play during this period. One of the things that the scriptwriters could do is to include the classroom teacher in the program; one way of doing this is to provide a segue for teacher-led discussion every so often in the program.

5. Training young recruits: Invariably, colleges and universities send their most senior teachers to Refresher Courses. As this study suggests, experienced teachers are often set in their ways and impervious to change. Younger teachers, on the other hand, may be more willing to try new things and to change the way they work. The government could suggest, or even insist, that each educational institution send junior teachers to these refresher courses. It is possible that the government will have a greater rate of success at converting these younger teachers into media enthusiasts.

6. Introducing the media at an earlier stage: This study shows that the belief of teachers and students are fixed. Both groups believe that the main job is to complete the syllabus. Perhaps what the government should consider doing is to make media an integral part of primary education all over the country; then expand it to include middle school, and then later high school. When these students come to college they will not react negatively to

the media and their positive response may encourage, if not compel, college teachers to bring the media into the classroom.

Directions for further research

1. Studies on students' beliefs: Much of what the participants in this study did in the classroom was determined by what they thought were the students' beliefs about English and the media. These beliefs may have been entirely wrong. In order to truly understand what students think and to determine why they do what they do, studies need to be conducted on students' beliefs. Some of the areas that could be focused on are: beliefs about English, beliefs about the media; beliefs about language learning, etc. Identifying these beliefs will not only help in determining if the media can be used, but will also provide insight into how they can be used. The findings will help producers determine the kind of programs that will keep the learners actively engaged.

2. Studies on the beliefs of administrators: Since these individuals play an important role in determining how the school/college is run, their attitudes about teachers, students, and language learning should be studied and compared with those of the students and teachers.

3. Research studies highlighting the experiences of teachers who have been successful in using the media in India should be conducted. This will provide insights into the factors that promote media use in the language classroom.

4. The efficacy of existing educational television and radio programs for different levels of students could be studied from the students' point of view. Why did they like or learn from

certain programs? It would also be of interest to see what role the popular media play in their acquisition of a second language, i.e., English in the Indian context.

5. The Refresher courses conducted by various universities and teacher education institutes need to be examined critically. How effective are they really at changing teachers' perceptions of or attitudes toward classroom practice? What do teachers take back with them from a course and what do they use in the classroom?

Summary

Using the classroom observations made between September and November 2002, the present chapter showed how the numerous beliefs of the participants identified in Chapter 5 actually played out in the language classroom. The observations showed that in most cases, the teaching practices that the participants adopted did not always support their beliefs; there was a disconnect between what the participants said they did, and what they actually did. Based on this, it was argued that not all beliefs were of equal importance, some were more dominant than others. Beliefs about "Completing the syllabus" and "students" were identified as the two dominant beliefs, with syllabus completion being the stronger of the two. The chapter also showed that the current set of beliefs of the participants' hindered, rather than promoted media use in the language classroom.

EPILOGUE

As I sit in front of the computer listening to Sheryl Crow sing "All I want to do is have some fun", I realize that this is what I may have been doing the past twenty years as a teacher educator. I may have been providing "fun"; the demonstration lectures may have been nothing more than a source of entertainment for teachers who wished to escape for a week or two from the realities of their job. For twenty years I have been advocating the use of media in contexts that I didn't fully understand. I was situated within contexts that were entirely different from the one that I grew up in, and had in mind, when I gave my demonstration lectures. This study, this yearlong journey has been a rude awakening of sorts. I am now beginning to understand why the teachers who attended the Refresher Courses kept insisting that the media wouldn't work in their context. If the schools and colleges are anything like the one where I conducted my study, then chances are only the ardent techno enthusiast is likely to try and incorporate the media into the classroom. The others will boldly go into the classroom just like thousands of their predecessors had gone before them – armed with a textbook. Advocates of media, however, need not despair. There is hope yet. This glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel is in the form of those "converts" who after attending the Refresher Courses have been successful in bringing the media into the classroom. Their success stories demonstrate that the media can be made a part of ones teaching practices despite the odds. Politicians and policy makers groan about the falling standards of English in India; they tell us when it comes to learning the language we are in dire straits. As a media enthusiast, I would like to tell them, "Don't worry, be happy. When it comes

teaching English, we are not in dire straits because soon we are going to have people teaching

English with Dire Straits."

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Appendix A

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher? Did anyone encourage you to become one? What is it about teaching that you like?

2. How long have you been teaching English? How long have you been teaching in this college? Which sections do you normally teach?

3. When you joined the teaching profession did you have any particular teacher in school/ college as your role model? Why did you look up to this individual? What was his/her teaching method?

4. Had you undergone any teacher education programs before you joined the profession?

5. In your opinion, what are the things a teacher must do to be considered a good or a successful teacher.

6. What is your aim as a teacher of English? What do you normally do when you are in the classroom? Are there any routines that you follow? Any reason you have adopted them?

7. How did you learn English? How has your experience as a language learner influenced you as a language teacher? What do you think is the best way for your students to learn English?

8. How important is English in the current Indian context? What do your students think of English?

9. What are your expectations of the students? What do you expect them to do while you are in the classroom?

10. Other than textbooks do you use any other material in the classroom? Why? How has it worked, describe what you did.

11. Have you ever used the media in the classroom? Why? Tell me about it and how it all worked. Do you know other teachers who have used the media in the language classroom?

12. In your opinion do you think teachers in India should use the media to teach English? How easy or difficult do you think it is/will be for teachers to use the media in the Indian context? When would you use the media and how would you use it?

CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in a research study entitled "ESL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH IN INDIA AND HOW THEY IMPACT ON MEDIA USE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM," which is being conducted by Upendran Subrahmanian, Department of Language Education, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA (Tel: 706-227-6877; in India, 40-27841393), under the direction of Dr Lynne Schrum, Department of Instructional Technology, University of Georgia, Athens (Tel: 706-542-4159). I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part in this study at any time without giving any reason, and without any penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of how teachers look at teaching, both in terms of method and context, and how these beliefs relate, if at all, to how they view the role of media in the English language classroom. It is hoped that such an understanding will help us plan more effective teacher training programs.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from this research but that the interview process could help me gain an insight into my own teaching practices; it will also help provide an input into creating better training programs.

My participation in this study involves the following procedures.
1.) The researcher will observe my class room to analyze my teaching style on two days; each observation lasting approximately one hour. The researcher will be taking written notes during this observation. . I also agree to allow the researcher to observe my classroom in order to understand my teaching context.

2.) I will answer questions posed by the researcher via email. I understand that the transmission of information while using email is considered a public domain. There is the potential that anything written could be intercepted by an unknown third party. I understand that the transcripts of the email will be maintained for a period of two years after the completion of the study

No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

No risks are expected.

The contents of the interview will remain confidential. All information collected about me will remain confidential. I understand that Internet communications, especially email communications, are insecure. Thus, there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed during electronic communications due to the technology itself. However, once the email text is received by the researcher standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. For instance, the researcher will delete a message from the inbox once it has been converted to a word document. My name and email address in all these documents will be deleted. I understand if information is published, it will be written in a way that I cannot be identified. However, I do understand that excerpts from the interview may be used without identifying their source by name.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached in Hyderabad by telephone at 27841393, or by email at supendran@hotmail.com

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____   _____

Upendran Subrahmanian, Researcher   Date
(706)-227-6877; supendran@hotmail.com

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu