Biographies, experiences and language practices: Teachers of Early Childhood Education in Mauritius.

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Abstract

This study explores Early Childhood Education teachers' experiences of learning English in multi-lingual Mauritius and the way these influence their pedagogical practices. English is the official language of instruction despite not being the first language of the majority of teachers and learners. Consequently, the children's first language has become an inexorable feature of Mauritian classrooms. Studying the construction of language pedagogy through teachers' accounts is a significant step towards understanding the existing dynamics among languages used in the classroom − more so in Early Childhood Education, a key stage that lays the foundation for further language development.

My study examines my participants' experiences of learning and teaching English in a range of contexts. The interpretative paradigm informs the choice of life history as research methodology. This methodology allows the researcher to co-construct the voice of the participants as agents and critics of their own experiences and practices. It provides the researcher with an insight into their experiences of language learning and teaching practices. Data was produced through biographic narrative interviews, classroom observations, informal conversations, and assemblage and commentary on selected artifacts. The data production process was directed towards producing deeper textured insights into the challenges and potential of the use of English.

The data was analysed through a grounded and inductive approach. The production of the narratives constituted the first level of analysis. In the second level of analysis, themes identified in the five narratives were analysed through a cross-case comparison. The third level of analysis acted as a validatory move wherein antithetical cases ('outliers') were further scrutinised to test initial findings.

The findings indicate that the process of teacher development spans across time and contexts that teachers occupy from the time of birth onward. Formal and informal as well as local and foreign contexts influence the teachers' language experiences in various ways at different points in time. The findings further draw attention to the individualised nature of teachers' becoming in the midst of blurred boundaries wherein a multiplicity of interacting factors mutually impact upon one another. Teacher agency also emerges as a salient feature of the process.

A model of teacher professional development is then presented using the biological construct of evolution to show the intricate link between biographies, experiences and practices. The metaphor of the evolutionary drift depicts teacher development as a process that comprises change through transformation, adaptation and assimilation. The double-edged nature of this process is however indicated since teachers can also modify their environment. The "double helix model of teacher professional development" is then proposed to represent the nuanced complexities of negotiating language learning in Early Childhood Education classrooms. The upward movement of the spiralling double helix highlights teacher professional development as a continuing process whereby biography and pedagogical practices evolve in the light of teachers' on-going experiences. Teachers enact the interpretation and re-interpretation of these experiences in their pedagogical practices. The thesis concludes by elaborating on the ways in which the study has pushed methodological, contextual and theoretical boundaries. It states the implications of the findings on teachers, teacher educators and policy makers while pointing to the limitations of the study and proposing possibilities for future research.

Key words: *Life history research, narrative inquiry, language pedagogy, Early Childhood Education.*

Declaration

I, Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen declare that,

(i)   The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii)   This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii)   This thesis does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

(iv)   This thesis does not contain other person's writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

   (a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;

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Signed: …………………………………………………………

Dedication

To my little Angel whose blessed presence led me through the initial stages of my journey.

We parted ways all too soon and you left us broken-hearted.

You will always live on in our hearts and thoughts.

To you, I dedicate this work to which you are inextricably linked.

May God bless you, my Baby.

I miss you.

Acknowledgements

It's been a long, pleasurable, enriching, yet tough journey
But, thank God, I wasn't alone.
To you all, I will always be indebted
For your support that carried me through.
The word sounds too shallow but the feelings run deep:
Thank you!

Professor Michael Samuel: For your continuous guidance, support and encouragement; for always making time to respond to my mails despite your hectic schedule; for pushing me to further heights and for so much more… It was an honour and a privilege to have you as a supervisor. Thank you.

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My parents: For (still) taking me and my family under your wings. Thank you for having instilled the value of education in me. Your dreams for your children are my motivation. I am driven by the urge to make you proud.

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God: For having armed me with passion for my study and courage till the end; for having surrounded me with such wonderful people. Thank you.

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List of abbreviations

ECE: Early Childhood Education

ECCEA: Early Childhood Care and Education Authority

L1: First language

L2: Second language

MA (TESOL): Masters of Education (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

MCA: Mauritius College of the Air

MIE: Mauritius Institute of Education

NCF: National Curriculum Framework

NHDC: National Housing Development Cooperation

OMEP: Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education)

PCK: Pedagogical Content Knowledge

TEP: Teacher Education Programme

TV: Television

UK: United Kingdom

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

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Prologue

Like every journey, the trigger to undertaking this study is a quest for a destination− here the answers to questions that have not ceased to intrigue me as a teacher educator.

Like every traveller, I am fully geared up and ready to set off. I am a mixed bag of feelings at this point; my sense of purpose is beset by much excitement at what I may discover and just a tinge of apprehension about the unknown as well as my ability to tackle it. The road will be long and undoubtedly thorny, but my zeal to conquer the mount is a match to any unsettling doubts.

I am, so far, a traveller none of you knows about and so, before taking my first step into the road that stretches ahead, I will plunge into my past and unfurl my biographical experiences of English language learning and teaching. This introspection into the days gone by serves to situate my study within my biography.

Shifting perspectives

In the early stages of my study, a colleague told me that the problem (read: limitation, not worthwhile) with life history research is that it tells stories of people's lives. "Why do I need to know about someone's life?" he wondered. His words surprised me. How could anyone − more so a person from the field of education − conceive of teaching as being an impersonal act? I am conscious that when I teach, I do so with the conviction of my beliefs about what I teach and how I teach. I harness my knowledge and experiences to provide my learners with what will be fruitful to them. This encounter with my colleague prompted me to search within my own self to understand what has made me the type of teacher educator I am. As I mapped out my route towards becoming a teacher educator, I reflected on the nature of 'being' and its link with teaching.

In the Prologue, I unbar my past to put forth the relevant features of my biography that have led to my study. Since the study centres on the teaching of English, I first position myself with respect to this language.

My experiences of learning English

My view of teaching and learning English has been shaped by three main experiences: being a daughter,

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being a teacher and being a mother. My upbringing was marked by my parents' decision to make English my mother tongue even though people around me— family members including my parents, neighbours and relatives— spoke Creole, except for the elderly people who spoke Bhojpuri. This deliberate decision of my parents can be accounted for by the fact that fluency in the English language was likely to be more useful to me academically. Thus, unlike many of my peers, I never had to struggle when the time came for me to learn English at school. With hindsight, I realise that my teachers were mostly traditional in their approach and the communicative element was missing but, since the language came naturally to me, I never found that limiting. While I shared a good relationship with all my teachers, only one of them, Mr. Yong, my literature teacher, struck me because of his strong personality and his teaching approach. Unlike the other teachers, he went beyond teaching the content and made us develop a critical understanding of the literary texts he taught. It was definitely his teaching that took me a level higher. English was in fact one of the subjects in which I performed well, often scoring the topmost marks so much so that it became an obvious choice when the time came for me to pursue higher studies at the University of Delhi, where I studied for a BA(Honours) and eventually an MA in English literature. There too I shared a very good relationship with my lecturers. I recall them as being wonderful persons but traditional in approach; learning was simply a process of memorising and reproducing rather than developing our ability to think critically and provide personal response to the texts. Yet, again, it never came to me to question their approach.

Given the 'success' of my parents' approach in developing my proficiency in English, I chose to replicate it when I myself became a parent and my children, like me, are acquiring the language as an L1 (first language). However, my experiences of English had culminated in a quite biased assumption that everyone can become fluent in English. It was incomprehensible to me how learning English could cause problems. Given the way in which I had learnt the language, I was not aware of the struggle learners go through when it is not an integral part of their language repertoire and when they have not benefitted from a conducive environment.

Evolving philosophies of teaching

My stints of teaching in a private secondary school before, during and after my university studies had limited my contact to children who are viewed as being academically weak and are typically described as 'slow learners' or 'low performers'. I bonded easily with my students and strove to help them learn English. Though, to my mind, I was teaching them the right way, I later realised that I was merely modelling my approach on that of my own teachers and my teaching was traditional. At that point

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in time, with no background in pedagogy, I had a very narrow view of teaching and learning and attributed my students' poor grades to their 'low' ability. When I joined the Mauritius Institute of Education[1] (MIE) as a lecturer in the English Department, I became aware of learner-centred approaches and was quite mortified at the 'crime' I had committed through sheer ignorance. I still wish I could go back to that time and start all over again so that I can make my students more active participants in their learning.

My position was, and to a great extent is still, that anyone can become a proficient user of the English language if teachers use the appropriate teaching approach. Teaching, according to me, should be contextualised, meaningful and fun. Teachers ought to encourage extensive use of English and promote learner interaction. This is the message I constantly reiterate in my 'lectures'. My incomprehension at the fact that there are so few trainee teachers who actually embrace innovative pedagogical approaches and persist in conducting teacher-fronted classes has led me to tackle the problem differently. I have therefore stopped 'lecturing' because merely telling trainees, who are in fact mostly practicing teachers, what to do, does not work. My own classes are mostly activity-based as I allow my students to 'experience' the activities or strategies and then discuss their effectiveness. I note that the students are more open to alternative ways of teaching as they feel more involved. As I discuss the methods with them, pondering on what would or would not work and why, I tap on their own knowledge of the field. Teachers come with their own knowledge that they generate on the basis of their experience. I cannot provide recipes for the successful teaching of English. I can only expose teachers to an array of methods which they will have to choose from and adapt. Discussions about what works and what does not reveal that the 'one- size-fits- all' concept is not relevant with regard to pedagogy. To-date, I never use the term 'lecture' as it does not reflect my philosophy of teaching. However, I must admit that the battle is not yet won. The majority of teachers revert to their initial practice once their course is over and they blend back into their staffroom.

Gradually it has dawned upon me that there has to be more to teaching than merely transferring knowledge from one's course to one's classroom. Studying for an MA (TESOL) at the University of Leeds, UK, sharpened my understanding of the plethora of factors that impinge upon one's pedagogical choices. It also aroused my awareness about the way in which the teacher is always at the receiving end: the one hardly ever consulted by policy makers but who is expected to implement decisions irrespective of his or her personal beliefs. However, on thinking about the way in which I shape my own sessions, I was simultaneously struck by the sheer power of the teacher due to his/her

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[1] The institution mandated by the State for teacher education in Mauritius

central role in the instructional process. Within the four walls of the classroom, it is the teacher who determines the type of learning experiences that learners have, irrespective of the dictates of lawmakers.

Being a mother and a teacher

Motherhood and the way I evolve as an educator are inextricably linked. When you are a mother and an educator, the boundary between your personal and professional lives automatically blur. My children, I acknowledge, are my teachers. Teaching them has enlightened me more about pedagogy than the books I have read. If the books have provided theories, motherhood has given me a better insight into praxis. My home proves to be fertile terrain which nurtures the teacher in me. It provides me with the opportunity to grapple with the burning question a teacher always wishes to find an answer to: How can I make learning successful?

When the personal and the professional selves meet

As a teacher educator, I am also called upon to conduct field visits where I observe teachers 'in action' in their classrooms. My notion of the teacher as an individual in his/her own right was reinforced as I noted that teachers do not necessarily view their subject, their learners and the learning process similarly. The scenarios I describe below are recent glimpses from literacy lessons in English with young learners, aged 3 to 7. They are from different school or classroom contexts and foreground the diversity of ways in which teachers conceive of their learners, and of teaching and learning. They reveal that teachers' practices vary in relation to these conceptions. The scenarios also highlight what I see as being inherent disparities in the teachers' discourse about their pedagogy.

Scenario 1: **(pre-primary school; pupils aged 3-5)**

The teacher tells me that she speaks English with the children and they have no problems understanding the language. However, while conducting her lesson, during which she reads a big book[1] aloud, she switches quite frequently to French and translates the story. Given the conviction with which she had stated that the children can understand English, I wonder if she is aware of her language switches.

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[1] Big books are story books of enlarged size for children. They contain big print and colourful illustrations which makes them appropriate for use with the whole class or groups   especially for literacy development.

Scenario 2: **(primary school; pupils aged 6-7)**

The teacher reads a big book aloud. The pupils join in unsolicited. The resounding chorus makes it apparent that they have heard the story many times and enjoy it. When I ask the teacher the frequency with which she speaks English during her classes, she replies that, since the children come from the village (implying that they have no exposure to English and do not use it in everyday life), she has to resort to Creole or French, that is their first or second language, for explanations during her English lessons.

Scenario 3: **(pre- primary school; pupils aged 4-5)**

The teacher uses English throughout her lesson. The pupils follow instructions and respond to her. They have no difficulties understanding her. The teacher later tells me that, previously, she had resorted to using the mother tongue. The process of switching to English happened gradually and successfully. Interestingly, we are in the same school as in scenario 2; the children are not only from the same rural area but also younger!

These salient events in my personal and professional biography and the reflections that they have triggered have led to the choice of my topic. These scenarios have reinforced my belief that every teacher is an individual. Teachers and their practices are forged by the experiences they have had. The study I undertake is an indication of my belief that 'teachers' is one word, but the individuals within this group are different selves − just like the rainbow is a single arch but it is composed of many colours. It is this multiplicity of selves within the profession that forms the crux of my study.

My decision to anchor my study in the Early Childhood Education sector is far from being fortuitous. This choice also lies at the intersection of my personal and professional selves. As a language teacher educator, I am conscious of the importance of the early years in the developmental process of children. I am further aware that this is the foundation stage for general cognitive and language development. As a mother, I have witnessed how language acquisition takes place within the environmental conditions we (predominantly parents and teachers) create. To the pedagogue, it is of utmost interest to find out and

understand how teachers, upon whom the language development of young children is incumbent, tailor their pedagogy and where they derive their pedagogical principles.

Chapter 1

Setting the scene

Introduction

In the Prologue, I immersed myself into a reflective recollection of my experiences of learning and teaching English and dwelt upon the biographical forces that had aroused my interest in the relationship between teachers' language learning experiences and their language teaching approaches. This incursion into my past has served to bring to the fore the power of my biography in shaping who I am. In this opening chapter, I situate my study into the broader context within which it was undertaken. I further explain my motivation for choosing to look into the pedagogical practices of English language teaching in Early Childhood Education (ECE) by considering the features of the local educational system and policy making, especially pertaining to the teaching of English language at pre-primary level.

Orientation to this chapter

Section 1 establishes the focus and states the aim of my study. Section 2 maps out the educational and linguistic terrain within which Mauritian pre-primary teachers operate. The "grand narrative" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.24) of the Mauritian landscape, thereby established, stands as a backdrop highlighting factors that influence the teaching of English and prompts me to unpack dominant images of teachers in such a setting. Section 3 then presents the rationale for the study and the need to look at the smaller, but by no means less significant, narratives of teacher development. It then puts forth the critical questions that will guide me in the research process.

Section 1: Focus and aim of the study

This study explores how Mauritian pre-primary teachers' biographical experiences of learning English shape their conceptions of the language and consequently impact on the way they present it to their learners. 'Conceptions' here refers to the teachers' views, beliefs and assumptions about the English language. It also takes into account their attitude towards the language. The term 'present' stands for the frequency with which English is used in the classroom, as well as the purposes for which and the ways in which it is used. It signals the fact that the way language is presented vehicles implicit and explicit

'messages' to the learners.

The scenarios I described in the prologue revealed disparities in the teachers' pedagogical practices as well as their underlying beliefs about the teaching of English. Taking into account this variation, I believe that looking into teachers' conceptions of their subject will assist me to understand teachers' practices. This is of significance since teachers can be described as mediators between the subject and the learners. While teaching, they not only mediate knowledge, but (often unconsciously) also transmit their attitude towards the subject to the learners (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Ploughing from my own experiences of teaching as a novice teacher, I can recall the period when I had to teach French at secondary level. While I was fluent in the language, I found teaching its grammar quite complex and problematic. My anxiety about having to teach this component was exacerbated by the fact that I was replacing the best French teacher in the school, much to the students' dismay. My state of mind translated into lack of enthusiasm and a rigid demeanour which was, in fact, poles apart from the type of teacher I was in my English classes. Teaching English was what I relished in because I was at ease with this language and I was aware that my students loved my classes. Pedagogy, then, seems to go well beyond knowledge of the subject (language) and pedagogical knowledge. There is something inherent in the way teachers relate to the subject they teach that determines how far their teaching is effective. There are certain subjectivities that emerge from one's teaching approach that cannot be ignored and it would certainly be insightful to get to their root.

Why is it necessary to understand teachers and the way in which they develop their belief system in relation to what they teach? According to Walsh, Tobin & Grave (1993, p. 465):

> "One crucial question that has been systematically ignored concerns the quest for meaning in what Bruner called "the ordinary conduct of life" (1009, p.19)… How do teachers make sense of their lives as teachers? As researchers we have measured people, but we have not listened to them. We have gone into classrooms and come out with little but numbers, as though the day-to-day interactions of human beings who spend large portions of waking hours in classrooms can be reduced to computations. One wonders what happens when those who have been researched look at the studies done of them and fail to see themselves in those studies?"

Two decades after this statement, it can be observed that qualitative studies have gained ground and, through the adoption of more innovative methodologies, researchers give more prominence to teachers and learners. Approaches such as life history and narrative inquiry help foreground the voices of those who have, in the past, been largely entrusted with a passive role in research. Further, research

reveals growing interest in the correlation between the way teachers conceive of their subject and their instructional practice (e.g., Cumming, 1989; Thompson, 1992; Crandall, 2000; Farrell & Lim, 2005). It is acknowledged that "teaching is a cognitive activity and that teachers' beliefs greatly impact on their instructional decisions in the classroom" (Farrell & Lim, 2005, p. 1). Teachers, to echo Borg (2003, p. 81), "are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs". Their approaches to teaching depend fundamentally on their systems of beliefs, in particular on the conceptions of the nature and meaning of the subject and of their mental models of teaching and learning (Thompson, 1992).

Nevertheless, Cross (2006) is of the view that inadequate attention is paid to what language teachers bring to the classroom and how this underpins their thinking around why they do what they do in the classroom. He stresses the fact that:

> "…the literature has only recently reasserted the "need to know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. Specifically, we need to understand more about how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know about language teaching, how they think about their classroom practices" (Freeman & Richards, 1996 in Valez-Rendon, 2002, p. 465)." (Cross, 2006, p.1).

Knowing about the way in which teachers develop their belief system is essential if we are to go by the Piagetian notion (Korthagen & Kessels, 1992) that people construct meaning through personal and social experiences. I believe that attempts to comprehend teachers and the way they teach entails looking at how teachers develop an understanding of their subject and its pedagogy. I draw from the realisation – based on my own experiences − that biography is a powerful factor influencing the type of teacher one becomes and turn my lenses towards the teachers' lives for an insight into how they experienced and interpreted the learning and teaching of English. I believe it will lead to an appreciation of the way in which their practice is tinged with their personal experiences of the English language.

My study focuses on Early Childhood Education teachers' pedagogy in the teaching of English. It is geared by the understanding that learning experiences at this stage shape the way the learners grow to view and learn language. However, my scrutiny is directed towards the teachers whom I view as being the most influential agents in the learning process. Despite the strides in research on teachers, I am surprised to note that there is still inadequate understanding about language teachers and their practice in certain multi-lingual contexts like Mauritius, where teachers grapple with various languages

they have to teach and which are not necessarily their mother tongue. I note, with a certain degree of incomprehension, that there is little attempt to understand what drives their teaching. I believe that research in language teaching, especially in second and foreign language contexts, can throw light on how teachers in such contexts construct their understandings of language pedagogy and how their professional selves develop.

My study therefore aims to:

- Document formal and informal encounters of pre-primary teachers with the English language in English as a foreign/second language context;
- Analyse how these encounters shaped the way in which individual teachers perceive the English language;
- Examine the link between the teachers' conceptions of English and the way they present it to their learners.

Having outlined the aims of my study, I now go on to delineate the linguistic and educational contexts within which the research was carried out. The information presented in the section below will not only help situate the study, but will also support my claim for the need to know more about the way in which language teachers develop their teaching practices on a site where various languages are used and taught.

Section 2: The national scene: anchoring the study in its context

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 26) assert, "Context makes all the difference". This prompts me to ponder over what Mauritian pre-primary teachers have to contend with when teaching English. As they step into the teaching arena, teachers are straddled with a number of considerations, the main ones in relation to my study being:

- An educational system within which the pre-primary sector is being given more prominence as the stepping stone for further learning;
- A national and educational language policy in which English has a privileged position;
- Learners who are from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Each of these sets the parameters which inevitably impact on the way in which teaching takes place. For a better appreciation of the teachers' practice, therefore, it is necessary to probe into these contextual features and examine the context within which the teachers are situated.

1.2.1 The Mauritian pre-primary sector in a nutshell

A survey of the different policy documents, Government reports and publications produced so far in the educational sector, and that are discussed below, reveal that the importance of Early Childhood Education and the need to reinforce it have been recognised by successive governments (Parsuramen, 1991; Parsuramen, 2001; National Committee for Educational Reforms, 1996; Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 1997; Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2008). The following statement in the *Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020* echoes what has constantly been said over the past decades regarding the role of pre-primary education:

> "Today the Government recognises the *pivotal* role played by pre-primary education in building the foundations upon which all future learning ultimately depends." (my italics). (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2008, p. 48).

It is noted that, over the years, policy makers have demonstrated an awareness of the areas that require improvement. The most common areas targeted have been the learning environment, access, training of teachers and the curriculum − all of which fall under the traditional iron triangle of quality, i.e. teacher education/training and qualifications, adult-child ratios and group size (Anning, Cullen & Fleer, 2009). Pre-primary education is compulsory in Mauritius. With the establishment of requisites for the registration of all schools, measures have been taken to attain minimum infrastructural standards (Parsuramen, 1991). In a setting where private pre-primary schools are predominant, access increased considerably following the construction of pre-primary schools in the compound of primary schools and with Municipal and Village councils[2] running pre-primary schools. Moreover an allowance of Rs 200[3], which is deemed to be equivalent to the monthly school fees, is granted to all children aged between 3 and 5. In 2012, it was noted that there were 1,031 registered pre-primary schools and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (children aged 4 5) worked out to 101% with an average of 13 pupils per teacher *(Digest of Education Statistics 2012)*. At the level of curriculum development, it is noted that the latest *National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary,* dated 2010, resulted from the need to offer world class quality education to Mauritian children, to "rationalize the pre-primary sector" (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2006, p. 9) and also:

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[2] Local authorities headed by a Lord Mayor or president who is elected work for the welfare of the community along with his councilors.
[3] Approximately 6 American dollars.

"To ensure that ALL children aged 3 to 5 years in Mauritius have the opportunity to develop their individual intellectual, socio-emotional and psycho-motor skills to the best of their capacity in order to build the confidence and self-esteem in learning that will not only prepare them for the next level (primary school) but, more importantly, lay the foundations for learning that will support them throughout their lifetime." (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2008, p. 11).

And what of teachers? The necessity for teacher training has been continually emphasised by policy makers over the years. Teachers, who have been described as "the main partners contributing to the success of reforms" (Parsuramen, 2001, p. 20) and "the most crucial element in any educational system" (ibid., p. 42) have paradoxically also been undermined on the basis of being under qualified (National Committee for Educational Reforms, 1996; Parsuramen, 1991; Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2008). The importance attributed by the State to formal training and qualifications for teachers is seen again through the perceived urgency of upgrading the teachers' qualifications. In the *Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020* (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2008) it is admitted that the "qualifications of the teaching staff... have always been a matter of concern" (ibid., p. 48) since:

"Owing to a lack of regulation, [the pre-primary sub-sector] had become an outlet for jobs for many who could not otherwise join the Primary sub-sector, the latter being well regulated by the Government." (ibid.).

The document goes on to elaborate on measures taken to ensure that "all pre-primary educators[4] are fully trained and qualified" (ibid., p. 5). It is however interesting to observe that, while research is increasing bringing out how teachers' practice is geared by their "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3), as discussed in section 1 above, policy makers appear to harbour a deficit notion of pre-primary practitioners due to their lack of formal training and qualifications. The latter are presented as not being good enough to join the primary sub-sector and as having managed to slip into the pre-primary sub-sector only because of a lack of regulation. Through repeated emphasis on the need for formal training and qualifications, policy makers undermine the impact of informal and personal experiences on teachers' practices. It is my endeavour, in this study, to understand how far such notions are justified through a better understanding of how biographical forces contribute to teachers' development.

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[4] In Mauritius, the term is now officially used to designate teachers

1.2.2 The language imbroglio in Mauritius and the teaching of English at pre-primary level

The complex national language landscape cannot escape our consideration if we are to explore teachers' meaning making with respect to their pedagogy. In Mauritius, English is a key language and subject in our educational system, which is modelled on the British system. Despite not being the first language of the majority of the learners (see Appendix i for Statistics of languages spoken in Mauritius), it is the official medium of instruction in schools. Our colonial past under British dominion and the linguistic capital English represents in the current international economic juncture underlie this paradox. One cannot forget that small island states are increasingly dependent on the links they forge with the rest of the world for their survival. Presently, "the school [continues to be seen] as a central element in the ability of the country to survive in a competitive world... Heavy responsibilities are placed on the educational system by the dynamic of the Mauritian society." (Parsuramen, 1991, p. 7).

As spelt out in The Education Act, the Minister of Education must ensure "the more effective teaching of English and the spread of the English Language in Mauritius" (Education Act, RL2/603 (1957) [Amendments]). While English is introduced right from pre-primary school, allowance is made for the use of the children's L1 (first language) as we are still governed by the Education Ordinance (1957). At lower primary level, though The Education Ordinance (1957) stipulates that any suitable language (understood to be the L1 of the children) can be used, English becomes the medium of instruction de facto since textbooks for all subjects except French, Creole and Asian languages, are in English (Auleear-Owadally, 2010). As from lower primary level, English is the medium of instruction for all subjects in the curriculum − again with the exception of French and Asian languages.

> "In the lower classes of Government and aided primary schools up to and including Standard III, any one language may be employed as the medium of instruction, being a language which in the opinion of the Minister is most suitable for the pupils.
>
> In Standards IV, V, and VI of the Government and aided primary schools, the medium of instruction shall be English, and the conversation between the teacher and pupils shall be in English; provided that lessons in any other language taught in the school shall be carried on through the medium of that language."
> (Colony of Mauritius 1958, pp. 129-130)

At secondary level, one's result in English Language determines whether one obtains a certificate and eventually a job. Scoring a *credit* in English at School Certificate level and a *pass* in General Paper at Higher School Certificate level are compulsory to obtain an overall pass.

Pre-primary schooling, as discussed earlier, is expected to lay the foundation and pave the way towards further learning, which necessarily comprises the successful acquisition of the English language. Inevitably, it is the teacher who shoulders the responsibility of ensuring that this materialises. The *National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary 3-5 years* (2010), entrusts teachers with the following weighty responsibilities with respect to language learning:

- Establish "secure foundations for (children's) language development";
- Adopt "good practices (to) help children achieve a good level of proficiency in language";
- Take into account "and cater for the needs of all types of children";
- "[U]se differential learning strategies while adopting inclusive pedagogical principles";
- "[A]ct as the initiator, motivator, guide and facilitator in the development of the language, communication skills and early literacy";
- "[D]evise and implement lessons...in a systematic way"

  (Adapted from: *National Curriculum Framework Pre-Primary 3-5 years,* 2010, p. 47)

Within a well-regulated system wherein ample opportunities have been created for teacher professional development, the teaching of English should not be problematic. And yet, despite the increasing intake of students enrolling for courses at the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), it is. The emphasis on English in our multi-lingual context has culminated in a schism between language used for communicative purposes and as the medium of instruction. In pre-primary schools, variations regarding language use for communication and instruction can be noted. Both teachers and children commonly speak their mother tongue, which is French and/or Creole, depending on the socio-economic background of the children (Tirvassen, 2001), and the institutional language policy. English is used to a lesser degree, unless the school policy stipulates it, as is the case in private English medium schools. However, in all cases, teachers resort to code-switching and translation, the extent of which depends on the school context and the teacher. The learners' progress in learning English is slower and more limited as compared to the two other languages. Teachers and learners display more ease and assurance while using French or Creole. Dussee (1985, p. 4) reveals that such tendencies are widespread:

"From my visits I learned and observed that children communicate and express themselves freely in Creole... From my discussion with most of the teachers I have learned that they communicate mostly in French and Creole rather than in English. Very little English is introduced and taught. Many teachers admit that English teaching is really negligible; they prefer to concentrate on teaching French. In many cases French is easier to the teacher."

Interestingly, studies conducted by Tirvassen (2001) and, more recently, by Auleear-Owodally (2010) replicate these findings. These are seen to echo the Director of Education's observation of lower levels of schooling as depicted in Ward's Report (1944, p. 11):

"In Standard VI some English is used, but so much advantage is taken of the permission given to explain difficulties in Creole or French, that English is very far from being the real medium of instruction. Sums written on the blackboard in English are explained in Creole or French, and teachers use great latitude in anticipating difficulties and dropping into Creole or French before the difficulty arrives. French on the other hand (sometimes mixed with Creole) is used with more freedom."

Thus, we find ourselves in an astounding situation where language teaching practices and language use in most pre-primary schools have not evolved over a period of sixty-six years (that is between 1944 and 2010) despite the strides in the field of language teaching approaches and the perceived increase in exposure to the English language due to the phenomenon of globalisation. Why is that so? What accounts for the fact that more structured policy at pre-primary level and opportunities for professional development through training programmes have, so far, had little impact on the way in which languages are taught? Teachers, who transact the curriculum in the classroom, have a prominent function as "curriculum makers" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p. 363). Clandinin & Connelly (ibid.) see them as "an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in the classroom". I believe it becomes all the more necessary to put them under the microscope and examine their motivations in using particular methodologies. Directing my lenses on the teacher may help to answer the following questions: Why is it that, even if officially children are expected to be taught English right from pre-primary level, this language is hardly ever used? (Tirvassen 2001). Why is it that teaching at all levels, including the teaching of English, is often carried out in French and Creole? (ibid).

Section 3: Rationale for the study

1.3.1 Why study teachers' language experiences?

Most research conducted in the field of education in Mauritius tends to evaluate the soundness of teachers' practice from a predominantly theoretical perspective. Teachers are viewed as mere policy or curriculum implementers and studies seek to 'evaluate' their effectiveness in terms of the theories of language teaching and learning that they apply in their practice. As the literature brings out, the limitations of such studies become apparent when they merely conclude: "for projects to be successful, teachers must be changed" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, p. 373). In the past, attempts have been

made to by-pass teachers and to minimise their role to that of mere enactors − for instance, by producing teacher-proof curricula (ibid). Yet, these have been unsuccessful at stifling the importance of the teacher. As Siraj-Blatchford (2009, p. 147) states:

> "One of the key variables in determining outcomes for young children that we find detailed in many reports, studies and discussion papers is the effect of the teacher on the nature and quality of education. In examining quality provision in the early years, the role of the teacher should be viewed as central to any critique. As such, the pedagogy adopted by the teacher should be considered closely."

For that reason, we must foreground the role of the teacher as well as value and reposition teaching as central to quality Early Childhood Education.

My study recognises teachers as key players in the classroom and believes that such a paradigm shift can help explore the understandings they have developed of the English language and of their pedagogical practices. This, I believe, will allow for a better insight into how languages are in operation in the classroom. The reasons for which it is considered worth being undertaken are discussed below.

In the first instance, the study acknowledges the significance of understanding the teachers' role in the instructional process while studying classroom practices. Hoffman-Kipp (2008, p. 162) posits:

> "For those who have long subscribed to a transmission perspective on learning...the equation is simple: identity doesn't matter. It's the unaltered content, the great books and ideas communicated, directly and efficiently, to students that does."

However, if we uphold a socio-constructivist view of the teaching/learning process, it is difficult to obliterate the human dimension. We must inevitably focus on the main actors in the teaching/learning process and the teacher is undoubtedly one of them. To date, no study of teachers' personal experiences of English and its influence on their practice has been undertaken in Mauritius though teacher trainers and other stakeholders bemoan the fact that professional development[5] is not reflected at the level of practicum and militate for the adoption of innovative approaches in language teaching. One of the few local studies in the field of pre-primary education carried out by Auleear-Owodally (2010) reveals that the teachers' own experiences as learners shape their conceptions of language teaching and learning thereby instigating them to reproduce the teaching models they have been exposed to:

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[5] Changes in practice (for instance through the adoption of 'new' teaching approaches) as a result of having followed teacher education programmes.

"It is this experience of pre- and primary schooling that our teacher informants share and this possibly impacts on their conception of what is important in their children's preschool education, and their pedagogical practices. They arguably reproduce the schooled type of language and literacy activities that they were exposed to as children." (ibid: 16).

Yet, despite acknowledging the powerful influence personal experiences of formal language learning have on teachers' conceptions and, by extrapolation, on their pedagogical choices, her study does not probe more deeply into this aspect to find out whether teachers merely ape their own teachers and, if so, why. The current study thus emerges from the need to delve further into teachers' experiences of language learning in a milieu where a number of languages are competing for attention.

Added significance of this study is due to its focus on the pre-primary sector. This field, which has been explored thoroughly in many countries, turns out to have a poor research output in Mauritius. The present Government's claim, that "additional resources will be committed for research and development of the sub-sector" (*Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020*, 2008, p. 49), substantiates the notion that research is a crucial element in policy decision. The focus on teachers especially proves to be timely since, most of the time, if not always, teachers are expected to translate policy into practice with little consideration given to the interface between the two. Teachers are generally relegated to the receiving end and not always involved in the policy making process. This may have to do with the status commonly attributed to teachers in ECE. As Vrinioti (2013, p. 151) argues:

"Despite the intention to raise the competence level of early education staff to that of a profession, it is obvious that the classic definition of profession (Freidson 2001; Parsons 1954; Stichweh 1994) and professionalism does not apply to the field of Early Childhood Education and care. It is for the most part recognised as a 'semiprofession' (Combe & Helsper, 1996). "

Policy decisions imposed from the 'outside' on teachers run the risk of arousing no feeling of ownership and, hence, no commitment to work towards its successful implementation. An insight into what lies behind teachers' practice will allow for informed decision-making which is crucial for forward planning and development. Anning, Cullen & Fleer (2009, p. 203) rightly opine:

"...along a sociocultural-historical perspective we should also accept that researchers have a responsibility to provide a critical perspective on policy and to advocate for a reflexive relationship between policy, research and practice. This could mean willingness to work constructively with government agendas, in preference to conducting theoretically-driven research in isolation from societal and political contexts."

This statement is of added interest to me as a teacher educator called upon to develop teacher education programmes and frame policy documents such as the *National Curriculum Framework* (see MIE's mandate in Appendix ii). It signals my attention to the fact that a better understanding of those with whom and for whom I work is the basis on which I can develop my own efficacy. My study, I believe, can help me to see otherwise. It can propel me to envisage alternative ways of conceptualising classroom practices by bringing about an insight into what underlies these.

Further motivation for this study lies in the context within which it is situated. Mauritius is a small island state that seeks to position itself in the international arena but that has an educational system that is still regulated by (archaic?) laws established during the colonial era. We note that the Education Act dates 1957 though there have been amendments. How far does policy that leans upon such a document take into account the realities of modern post-colonial Mauritius? How far is the law that gears the educational system with respect to its medium of instruction coherent with the current linguistic reality of the island and its people's language choices? How are past, present and future reconciled (if they are) and how is this played out at the level of language teaching in the classroom? How do teachers construct their practices on such a site? The study thus stands as being potentially valuable as it offers rich scope to extend the current understanding of teacher identity and teacher identity research outside the traditional western/developed world context.

1.3.2 Critical questions

Having pondered deeply over the issues discussed above and, in the light of my personal story, I formulated my critical questions. These questions are an attempt to encompass the key issues highlighted in the discussion above:

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1. **What are teachers' biographical experiences of learning English?**
2. **How do these (if they do) influence their conceptions of English and its pedagogy?**
3. **Why do teachers' biographical understandings of the English language influence their classroom practices the way they do?**

These questions naturally embed a number of other questions and have been broken into sub-questions for a more comprehensive approach to data production and analysis:

- How have the teachers experienced the English language so far?
- How do they conceive of the English language?
- What are the main factors that have shaped their conceptions?
- What are their beliefs about the teaching of English at pre-primary level?
- How do their conceptions of English and beliefs about language instruction impact upon the way they teach it?

My critical questions will direct me through the research and sign-post potential aspects of the teachers' lives that require closer scrutiny with respect to my field of inquiry.

Chapter summary

This chapter complements the prologue. It established and justified the focus of the study. It provided contextual information, foregrounding crucial features of the Mauritian educational system, such as the perception of and expectations from pre-primary teachers. It emphasised the position of English in multi-lingual Mauritius, drawing attention to the way it impacts upon teachers' experiences of language learning and their teaching practices. It also established the rationale for the study by highlighting the need to reposition and better understand teachers for added insight into their practices. The chapter ended with the formulation of the critical questions that will guide the study.

Overview of chapters

Prologue

The prologue is devoted to my biography. It charts my path in the learning and teaching of English in the multi-lingual Mauritian context, bringing out the manner in which my personal and professional selves intersect and blur, mutually impacting on each other. I explain how this reflective introspection underlies my interest in understanding 'who we are' in relation to 'how we teach' and explains why teachers' knowings lie at the heart of my study.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 elaborates on the linguistic and educational contexts in which the study has been undertaken. It extends the personal argument set forth in the prologue and further justifies the choice of my topic with respect to current educational preoccupations regarding English language teaching. It also argues for the need to attribute a more central position to teachers and for alternative ways of coming to understand language pedagogy. The critical questions that set up the parameters for and geared the study are stated.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 lays the theoretical foundation for my study. It highlights the significance of teachers' identity in understanding their professional development and pedagogical choices. It then narrows down to an in-depth critical consideration of the development of Early Childhood Education in Mauritius in the face of international drives. The theoretical grounding enables my understanding of teachers' knowings in conjunction with pedagogical practice to crystallise and thence develop the conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is also layered with the literature as it describes and justifies the research methodology, especially regarding the choice of life history approach. I detail the choice and profile of participants and instruments for data production. I also explain how research protocols and ethical considerations were observed. Additionally, in this chapter, I dwell upon the dilemmas I faced during the implementation phase and how I tackled and resolved these. Finally, the analytical framework is outlined with respect to the different levels of analysis and I explain how I proceeded to the formulation of my thesis.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, I present the narratives of five of my six participants which depict their biographical experiences of learning and teaching English in different contexts. Through narrative analysis, I draw from the storied lives of my participants to bring out the range of biographical influences factoring in their becoming and shaping their pedagogical practices. While some features of the teachers' journey echo in the different stories, there is evidence that the teachers' professional growth was an individualised

process thereby countering any attempt to essentialise or normatise it. The chapter ends by putting forth the initial conclusions that emanated from my first level of analysis.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 constitutes the second level analysis, that is the analysis of the narratives. Through further refinement of the data obtained, themes that cut across all the stories are identified. A comparative approach is then adopted to further analyse the data in relation to the themes. The analysis serves to shed more light on the plethora of factors that influenced the teachers' language experiences and the nature of these influences. The blurred boundaries of the diverse learning sites, the inter-relational flow that linked the different factors, as well as teacher agency emerge as salient features of the process of teacher professional development.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 centres around the analysis of antithetical cases, that is the narratives of participants described as 'un-typical'. The term 'un-typical' is defined and justification is offered regarding the categorisation of three of the participants as being so. I also justify my decision to analyse the data from an alternative perspective on the basis of analytical validity. The findings obtained from this level of analysis are described and compared with findings from the previous level to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The first two critical questions are answered in this chapter.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 veers towards the culmination of my study and the elaboration of a new thesis on the basis of findings obtained from the successive levels of analysis. The metaphor of the evolutionary drift that has been identified to explain the construct of teacher professional development is explained, justified and discussed. The emergent thesis, namely "the double helix model of teacher professional development", is then discussed foregrounding the way in which salient features of teachers' biography forge their professional selves and hence inform their pedagogical practices. This chapter also provides the answer to the third critical question.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 is the final chapter. It describes the way in which the current study has pushed boundaries at the methodological, contextual and theoretical levels. Further, the implications of the findings from my study on teachers, teacher educators and policy makers are brought out. The chapter nevertheless also points to the limitations of the study and proposes future avenues for new research.

Epilogue

Displacing the final full stop from the end of chapter 8, I use the epilogue as added space to sit back contemplatively and further mull over the findings. There dawns the realisation that, if the study has brought about a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study, it has, in its wake, also generated new questions. In the epilogue, basing myself on "the double helix model of teacher professional development," I indicate what a successful enactment of the evolutionary drift entails...

Different coloured pages were used to indicate specific sections of the thesis. While most of it is printed on white paper to indicate conventional or traditional sections of a thesis, I chose to print the Prologue and the Epilogue on green paper to indicate the link between these two sections despite the fact that they are separated physically (with respect to the number of pages) and in relation to time. Indeed, taken together, these two sections track my growth as a researcher, the Prologue bringing out my position at the outset of my study and the Epilogue reflecting my growth in the end. The storied narratives are printed on peach-coloured paper as they can stand alone as the tales of teachers. Given that they are embedded with a level of analysis, they speak for themselves.

Chapter 2

Reviewing the literature

Introduction

The previous chapter was been set as a backdrop to the study. It provided information that served to anchor the study in its context. It shed light on the Mauritian education system, focusing particularly on the status of English and its place in the curriculum. It also highlighted the way in which language policies impact upon the teaching and learning of English, especially at pre- primary level. As a stepping stone for the study, chapter 1 set forth the rationale and critical questions.

Orientation to this chapter

In the present chapter, the literature examined with respect to key concepts underlying the study is discussed. This chapter serves to:

(i) Establish the significance of teacher identity and foreground the role of biographical experiences in its development;

(ii) Develop an insight into the nature of professional knowledge and its development;

(iii) Examine the Mauritian Early Childhood Education sector in relation to initiatives at international level.

The areas highlighted above were identified in the light of the critical questions formulated. They assisted me to better understand the nature of the phenomenon being studied and to develop a theoretical lens to design the data generation plan, produce tools for data generation and analyse the data.

The study looks into the influence of teachers' biographical experiences of English on their conceptions of the language and its teaching in Early Childhood Education. It is based on the belief that teachers' pedagogical practices are grounded in knowledge derived from personal experiences of learning and using the language. An understanding of teachers' conceptions of language requires an insight into the shaping of their belief system. Section 1 of this chapter therefore argues for the need to look into teacher identity as a means of underscoring how teachers' professional selves develop. It surveys the recent

literature on teacher identity for an insight into the concept of 'teacher identity': How is it defined? What is its significance? How is it studied? Additionally, it explores the types and nature of factors that influence the way in which teachers construct their professional selves.

Section 2 delves into teacher knowledge in order to uncover the theoretical underpinnings of teachers' praxis. It sheds light on what research studies reveal with respect to what constitutes *teacher knowledge* and how this is acquired. Further, it examines the connection between teacher identity, teacher knowledge and teachers' practices.

Section 3 discusses the study with respect to the field being explored, namely English language teaching in the Mauritian Early Childhood Education sector. It analyses policy moves at international level that have spurted off initiatives and driven the local agenda. Finally, it examines the interface between policy and practice in multi-lingual classrooms. The review of the literature drew my attention to certain issues with respect to the topic of the study that require further investigation. These are highlighted in the current chapter.

Emerging insights from the literature scrutinised also served to establish the temporary conceptual lens that guided my choice of the research methodology for the production and analysis of the data. This model is presented and described in Section 4. It spells out the main factors that exert their influence on teacher development and illustrates how these are linked.

Section 1: Biography and the construction of teacher identity

This section deals with teacher identity and the process through which it develops. After bringing out the inherent difficulties of attempting to define 'teacher identity', it establishes the significance of biographical forces in the process of becoming a teacher.

2.1.1 What is (teacher) identity?

'Teacher identity', the current buzzword in the field of education, reflects the growing awareness that identity is "a crucial component determining how teaching and learning are played out in schools and classrooms" (Clarke, 2007, p. 186). Following the recognition that an intricate link exists between who teachers are and how they teach, researchers have turned their lenses towards these key agents in the classroom and are zooming in on their lives. While a plethora of studies have been conducted on this

concept a niggling doubt persists about their ability to formulate a neat definition of teacher identity. According to Olsen (2008, p. 4) teacher identity "is hard to articulate, easily misunderstood, and open to misinterpretation".

The concept of identity, its meaning and what it stands for bring to my mind the words of Richard II in the famous abdication scene:

"... I have no name, no title;
No, not that name was given me at the font,
But 'tis usurped. Alack the heavy day,
That I have worn so many winters out,
And know not now what name to call myself!"
("Richard II": V, i, pp. 254-259).

Richard II's symbolical gesture of handing over the crown to Bolingbroke to abdicate his throne and office as King of England prompts me to ask: Can a few symbolical objects make up the man? Is one's office only skin deep? A scrutiny of some studies on teacher identity, e.g., Goodnough (2010), Olsen (2008), Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark & Wayne (2002), and Sachs (2001), clearly reveals that this is not the case. From the literature, it is evident that teacher identity is multi-layered and encompasses personal identity (constituting feelings, beliefs, values and emotions) and professional identity (constituting notions of professional commitment, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness). Being a teacher entails merging these two facets since function and identity "are not mutually exclusive, but rather intertwined aspects of the developing professional" (Walkington (2005, p. 54). Teachers thus craft their teaching in the light of their personal experiences. Their teaching is an enactment of their personal and professional selves and an application of their understandings of the teaching and learning process. Teachers construct these understandings on the basis of their lived experiences. Any attempt to understand teachers' pedagogical practices therefore calls for a consideration of teacher identity and, in turn, for an understanding of how life experiences shape identity.

2.1.2 Biography and teacher identity

What is the place of biography in the study of teacher identity? When Richards & Lockhart (1994, p. 36) contend that:

"Teaching is a very personal activity, and […] individual teachers bring to teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching." (my italics).

and Samuel (2008, p. 87) posits:

"All individuals own and act out "theoretical" perspectives around teaching and learning; all of us have inherited and develop our own brand of principled positions which reflect our assumptions around many educational matters…" (my italics).

they are, I believe, establishing strong connections between individual teachers' biography and their professional identity. Teacher identity is forged over time; it is an on-going process (becoming as opposed to being) wherein the development of a teacher self involves the assimilation and rejection of a multitude of influences one encounters in the course of one's life – as brought out by Mitchell & Weber (1999, p. 8):

" …we use multiple voices: our voices as practitioners, teacher educators and researchers, former school teachers, writers, feminists, friends, parents, daughters, and so on. We also include the voices of many others, especially those of our students, teaching colleagues, family members, friends, and the scholars whose work inspires us…most of the time, our voices are too intermingled to signpost…we wrote this book through our "whole" (multiple and ever in flux) selves."

Identity formation emerges as a contextual construct comprising personal, social and professional dimensions. Engaged in this complex process, teachers often find themselves within the nexus of acting, interacting and even conflicting forces. Since teacher identity is the creation of coalescing forces, it is necessary to understand how individuals negotiate these in the process of *becoming* a teacher.

Studies conducted to explore teacher identity have revealed a gamut of factors impacting upon the process of identity development. Table 1 below presents a snapshot of recent studies on teacher identity and serves to bring out the breadth of the field under scrutiny. This overview of salient factors alerts me to potential areas for deep focus as well as possible limitations or gaps in this research area. In the left column, the factors under examination are listed, while in the right column, the authors of the diverse research studies are given. Some of the studies mentioned are looked into more closely in the discussion that ensues.

Factor under focus	Authors
Teacher Education Programmes	Parker & Alder (2005)
	Arnon & Reichel (2007)
	Merseth, Sommer & Dickstein (2008)
	Horn, Nolen, Ward & Campbell (2008)
	Warshauer Freedman & Appleman (2008)
	Ronfeldt (2008)
	Sexton (2008)
	Walkington (2005)
Instructional context	Walshaw & Stuart (2001)
	Shi (2002)
	Sato (2002)
	Raffo and Hall (2006)
	Cook (2009)
	Kanno & Stuart (2011)
Community of practice	Gratch (2001)
	Franzak (2002)
	Goodnough (2010)
	Battey & Franke (2008)
	Singh & Richard (2006)
Learners	House (2002)
	Gibson (2002)
	Esbenshade (2002)
	Winston & Soltman (2002)
Teacher perception	Arnon & Reichel (2007)
	Hattingh & de Kock (2008)
Cultural identities	Hoffman-Kipp (2008)
Diaspora sensibilities	Kooy & de Freitas (2007)
Teacher agency	Gratch (2001)
	Johansen (2002)
	Herndon (2002)
	Sackville (2002)
	Johnson (2002)
	Robinson (2002)

Factor under focus	Authors
Professional knowledge	White & Moss (nd)
Policy and teacher education	Parker & Adler (2005)
Policy, ideology & practice	Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark & Warne (2002)
Policy & educational structuring	Sachs (2001)
Biography	Seetal (2006) Tobias (2012)

Table 1: Overview of factors influencing teacher identity development

The diverse foci adopted in these studies reveal numerous learning or development sites, such as schools/classrooms, teacher education institutions, the political context and the self. They also arouse consciousness of the interplay of factors involved in defining teachers: whilst some factors exert an external influence (e.g., policy, teacher education programmes, school communities) and others an internal influence (e.g., perception, cultural sensibilities, professional knowledge), it would, I believe, be misleading to view them as acting in isolation. Rather, these influences are constantly interacting upon one another and upon individuals. The latter carefully negotiate them to reach their personal definition of the type of teacher they want to be and "to enact their professional selves in particular ways" (Sexton, 2008, p. 175). Consequently, becoming a teacher involves:

> "an ongoing process in negotiation and struggle among various narratives composed as scripts from the teachers' histories in gender, social class, and racial, ethnic, and family groups; multiple and conflicting conceptions of teaching and education in our popular culture; and stories surrounding teaching and learning that teachers have composed from years of experience". (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 75).

It is important to point out that the formation of identity is not fortuitous nor does it entail blindly perpetuating behaviours and beliefs (Walkington, 2005). A consideration of these factors should thus not undermine the agentic potential of teachers who have the ability to resist certain influences, overcome constraints and recreate themselves (Pillay & Govinden, 2007). Some of the above-mentioned studies, (Gratch, 2001; Johansen, 2002; Herndon, 2002; Sackville, 2002; Johnson, 2002; and Robinson, 2002) clearly evidence teachers' capacity to engage in reflective practice in order to re-define their selves by ridding it of previously upheld beliefs or behaviours. Rondfelt and Grossman (2008, p. 44) argue that novice teachers are capable of exercising agency in order to define the shape the type of teacher selves they wish to become:

"Novices do not take up all strategies that they encounter. Some ways of doing in classrooms can represent ways of being that run counter to who they want to become as professionals. As such, novices may define their possible selves in terms of the practices in which they want to engage. In this sense, the choice of which practices to appropriate and which to reject helps define professional identity."

A number of models illustrate the intricate and multi-layered process of teacher identity development. Adopting a longitudinal and multi-dimensional perspective, these models bring to the fore the diversity of factors involved in identity development over time and across locations. Samuel's Force Field Model of Teacher Professional Development (1998, 2003) foregrounds the forces of biography, context, institutional setting and programmatic impact which act upon the teachers, "push(ing) and pull(ing) teachers' roles and identities in different directions" (2003, p. 11). Olsen's (2008) model demonstrates how teachers' past, present and future; personal and professional lives; and context and self intermingle and mediate on one another. Clarkes's (2009) model encompasses (i) the substance of teacher identity (the subjective dimension), (ii) the authority sources of teacher identity (issues of politics and power), (iii) the self-practices of teacher identity (techniques and practices to shape teaching selves), and (iv) the endpoint (the goal of being a teacher) within a context of ongoing identity development.

On considering all the levels of influence inherent in these models, my attention is drawn to the fact that, while the literature is quite vocal about the more formal aspects of teachers' experiences, namely schooling and teaching, it tends to marginalise informal experiences (outside the classroom/school/ professional sphere) which surely impact significantly on the teachers' becoming. Do individuals form notions in specific or chosen settings? Surely, the self is open to influences irrespective of the time and place, in both a conscious and an unconscious process. In that case, must not informal learning experiences be given as much attention as formal ones? Further, I am perplexed at the emergence of a relatively new research area known as 'teacher professional identity' where the focus is predominantly on factors from the educational and professional landscapes that influence the development of teachers' (professional) identity (Beijard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Swennen, Volman, & Van Essen, 2008) since I believe that teacher professional identity and teacher identity are embedded within each other. Does not an exclusive focus on the professional and educational contexts deliberately ignore other potential sources of teacher professional development and personal aspects of the self that contribute to the development of teachers' selves? After all, as Swennen, Volman & Van Essen (2008, p. 171) point out, the construction of identity does not take place in isolation but is in fact "affected deeply by factors such as social class, gender, and race." Can identity be splintered into discrete units (identities?) then? Can restrictive paradigms afford a comprehensive understanding of the

process of teacher (professional) development? These questions will be a central consideration in the course of my study.

Further, it is also striking that most studies on teacher identity are rooted in western/developed countries. It is therefore evident that factors in other contexts, such as small islands, have been under examined. While the studies are enlightening, they represent limitations with respect to their application in or relevance to other contexts. The current study, which looks into language teachers' identity and their development in a multi-lingual post-colonial small island context, proposes to address this gap by studying the way in which teachers have been socialised into language[6] use and developed notions of pedagogy both inside and outside the classroom right from an early age. It will look into the way in which teachers' experiences have developed their conceptions of English and its teaching, both explicitly and implicitly.

Section 2: Teachers' professional knowledge

Earlier, I had pointed to the link between teacher identity, teacher knowledge and teachers' practices. Since this study seeks to examine teachers' pedagogical practices, it is deemed that it should be founded on an awareness of what constitutes teachers' professional knowledge for a better insight into teachers' classroom practices and its relationship with teacher identity. This section therefore digs into the field of teacher knowledge, which encompasses the literature on teacher learning, teacher thinking and teacher development, in an attempt to elucidate the following questions:

- What is teacher knowledge?
- Where is teacher knowledge constructed?
- How is it constructed?
- How is it linked with teacher identity development?

2.2.1 Defining teacher knowledge

Teacher knowledge or professional knowledge is the body of knowledge teachers require in order to practice as effective practitioners, that is to structure learning experiences in a way that matches the needs of the learners (Leask, 2001). According to Leask (2001, p. 10), "Classroom teaching is only the most visible part of the job of the teacher." Underlying the tip of the iceberg, the author contends, lie

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[6] The term "socialised into language use" here refers to the explicit or implicit 'push' towards particular languages given their predominance as language(s) of the environment or because they stand as cultural capital.

hidden aspects of teachers' professional expertise which allow them to prepare and evaluate lessons; plan a sequence of lessons to ensure that learning progresses; and establish routines and procedures which ensure that the work of the class proceeds as planned. The successful enactment of these pedagogical actions is rendered possible by the teachers':

• Personality − including the teachers' ability to capture and hold the interest of the class, to establish their authority;
• Subject knowledge;
• Professional knowledge about teaching and learning; and
• Professional judgement built up over time through reflection on experience.

The survey of the literature reveals that, if earlier, content knowledge (what to teach) and pedagogical knowledge (how to teach) were viewed as separate entities, the notion of PCK (pedagogical content knowledge) served to bridge the schism between the two (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This revolutionary change was brought about by Shulman (1986, p.8) who claimed that: "Mere content knowledge is likely to be as useless pedagogically as content-free skill." The significance of PCK lies in the fact that it represents "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). PCK thus emerges as an important feature of effective teaching and it urges us to view teaching as going beyond the mere transmission of content. However, in addition to content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, Shulman (1987) mentions other vital aspects of teacher knowledge, namely curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends.

As insights into the multi-faceted act of teaching grew, the perception and definition of teacher knowledge changed over time. Other researchers have identified or emphasised other types of knowledge they believe are crucial in determining how one teaches. Some examples are: practical knowledge (Zhao, 2012), personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1989), and knowledge of social beliefs (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). If the first two examples focus on classroom practices constructed in situ, the latter example draws our attention to the fact that teachers are situated in specific social contexts that shape the beliefs and understandings that undergird their pedagogy. Attempts to bracket what teachers should know led to coining the term 'teacher capacity'. This appears to be a move to counteract the narrowness of the term 'teacher knowledge'. Teacher capacity comprises a range of

attributes, namely teacher's knowledge, skills and dispositions (Grant, 2008) – features that are ignored in Shulman's model which values knowledge of learners, context and content to the detriment of teacher-related considerations. In addition to offering a broader view of teachers' knowings, teacher capacity stands out as being a more dynamic construct which conceives of teacher development as a life-long and context bound process (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Recognising that:

> "as events with wide-ranging consequences occur, and as developments in science lead to technological advancements, society and government have made demands for standards and accountability that require teachers not only to keep pace with the change but to lead the change." (Grant, 2008, p.127).

the definition of teacher capacity has been altered in relation to new demands made on teachers as a consequence of changes in time and context.

Teaching stands out as an intricate act that constitutes personal, professional, social and political dimensions. The various movements in conceiving of the type(s) of knowledge that underlie the teaching act indicate that "debates about what teachers need to know, including their skills and dispositions, change and evolve in response to changing social, economic, and political agendas" (Grant, 2008, p. 129). They are indicative of the fact that, what teachers need to know, goes well beyond their subject or classroom and is determined by a wide range of factors.

2.2.2 Teacher knowledge development

The literature reveals that studies on teacher knowledge development predominantly present teachers as the repository of two main types of knowledges: 'received' knowledge and 'constructed' knowledge. If viewed along a continuum, "received" knowledge and "constructed" knowledge can be positioned on opposite poles. Received knowledge emanates from formal sources such as research, teacher education courses and workshops (Wilson & Berne, 1999). It aims primarily at certification or the implementation of the curriculum (Xu & Connelly, 2009). The emphasis is on 'knowledge-for-teachers' rather than "teacher knowledge" (ibid., p. 221). Knowledge as received upholds a highly traditional and behaviourist view of teacher learning as knowledge transmission whereby the teacher is relegated to the passive position of practicing as taught (told) by authorities. Within this positivist perspective, the teachers are equipped with the 'best practices'. As Johnson and Golombek (2002) argue, teachers are often viewed as objects of study rather than knowing professionals or agents of change. They are marginalised by being told what to do and how to do it. Researchers, on the other hand, are privileged the creators of knowledge (ibid).

At the pole to the other extreme, I position knowledge that is actively constructed by teachers who build their personal notions and understandings on the basis of formal and informal lived experiences. Such knowledge stems from teachers' experiences as learners as well as from their personal experience as teachers within the classroom setting–Clandinin's (1989) "personal practical knowledge"; through observation, collaboration and interacting with colleagues (Wilson & Berne, 1999); and reflection (Buehl & Fives, 2009). As Johnson (2006, p. 236) posits, a plethora of factors shape the way teachers teach:

> "teachers' prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and, most important, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do."

Further, the emergence of social theories (Johnson, 2006), socio-cultural theories (Richards, 2008) and studies on teacher cognition (Borg, 2003) have brought about the awareness of teacher learning as being socially mediated and situated. Johnson (2006, p. 238) aptly argues that:

> "Learning, therefore, is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal meditational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity."

Within such a scenario, teachers stand out as the "users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their […] students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts" (ibid., p. 239).

The literature thus reveals that teaching reconciles the paradox of being a "very personal activity" (Leask, 2001, p. 9) as well as a "profoundly politically and socially constructed" (Goodson, 2003, p. 19) act. Teacher learning takes place on various sites in a process that Wilson and Berne (1999) describe as "scattered and serendipitous" (p. 173) thereby making it difficult to pin down what teachers acquire across the different experiences. Research has however shown that "it is what teachers know as persons, more than what they are taught, that is central both to understanding teacher action" (Xu & Connelly, 2009, p. 221). This substantiates the view posited earlier with respect to teacher professional identity. It is evident that understanding teacher knowledge goes well beyond investigating the "professional knowledge landscape in which teachers live and work" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 24). Whilst the school is undeniably a primordial site of knowledge construction, other aspects of teachers' lives should also be looked into. The view being upheld here is that the personal domain feeds into the development

of teachers' professional knowledge and cannot be cast aside for an exclusive focus on the professional domain. In fact, a study conducted by Tirri, Husu & Kansanen (1999, p. 915) has shown that:

> "when teachers talked about instances of practice, they were talking about themselves. Events seemed to be filtered through the person of the teacher. Teachers used their "selves" to manage both the problems and the possibilities of work…Many saw little distinction between their "selves" at work and outside of it."

This "blurring of personal and professional boundaries" (ibid.) points to the indissoluble link between the personal and professional selves teachers, hence the blurring of teacher identity and knowledge. Along this line of thought, Singh and Richard (2006) posit that learning to teach is a struggle not only around methods and content knowledge, but essentially, about *who one is as a teacher.* Therefore, Cross (2006) urges for a shift in debates about knowledge which are predominantly about what to teach(content) and instead to a consideration of who language teachers are and, by extension, what is teaching.

The challenge, according to me, is to locate the development of teachers' knowings/teachers' selves at the intersection of the personal, professional, social, political and historical dimensions, but more so, to understand how this is played out by individual teachers. What is the process through which teacher professional development (which merges teacher identity and teacher knowledge development) takes place? How do teachers construct their pedagogy in the midst of interacting forces? Are some forces more powerful than others? Does this process always have a successful culmination? What of teachers who remain insensitive or immune to these forces or are unable to negotiate them? The endeavour to find answers to these questions can best be undertaken through a study of teacher identity anchored in teachers' biography. It will entail adopting a research methodology that will not only uncover the various forces at work but also reveal how teachers manoeuvre among these to construct their professional selves.

Section 3: Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Internationally, perceptions of Early Childhood Education have greatly evolved over the years. Mauritius has not remained immune to the trend; developments in this sector have been largely engineered by global ventures. This section examines the ramifications of international action on the development of ECE at national level. It analyses policy drives and the extent to which the framework established supports the successful implementation of worldwide initiatives in connection with English language teaching in ECE.

2.3.1 Global initiatives to reposition ECE

The importance of Early Childhood Education is now openly recognised. It is understood that this stage of schooling prepares children for further stages of education, determines eventual academic success and improves the chances of children from poorer homes (Ritblatt, Garrity, Longstreth, Hokoda & Potter, 2013; Penn, 2008; Wortham, 2006; Menyuk & Brisk, 2005; Roberts & Neal, 2004; Weikart, 2000). The Jomtien conference stands as a landmark in the worldwide education scene in establishing the vitality of basic education for social progress and creating an impetus for improving the quality of such education (Lakin, 1994). By triggering a resurgence of the interest in early childhood, it has propelled international funding agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nation Development Programme and the UNICEF to invest more substantially in this sector and countries to focus more closely on ways to enhance it (Bennett, 1993). Early Childhood Education figures prominently in the "Principles For Action" as a necessary precondition for educational quality, equity and efficiency (UNESCO report, 1994). The main focal points for strategic action in order to achieve these, as stated in the report (ibid.) are:

- Learners and the learning process;
- Personnel;
- Curriculum and learning assessment;
- Materials and physical facilities.

The conference laid emphasis on the need for training and incentives for teachers; curriculum and assessment that reflect a variety of criteria; adapted materials and infrastructure; improved conditions for teaching and learning; non-formal education; and coordination among partners.

The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) reaffirmed the vision of the Jomtien conference and stated its commitment to achieve "Education For All" goals. This Framework sets out specific goals among which are the expansion and improvement of comprehensive early childhood care and education. Of particular relevance to my study, it can be noted that one of the prerequisites earmarked for the successful implementation of education programmes is:

> "a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and builds upon the knowledge and experience of the teachers and learners." (The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000: nd)

Further, the key role of teachers in reform initiatives is highlighted:

> "Teachers are essential players in promoting quality education…they are advocates for, and catalysts of, change. No education reform is likely to succeed without the active participation and ownership of teachers. Teachers at all levels should be respected and adequately remunerated; have access to training and ongoing professional development and support…and be able to participate…in decisions affecting their professional lives and teaching environments." (ibid.).

The initiatives of the Jomtien conference and Dakar Framework were easily transported into the Millenium Goals (Goal II: Achieve Universal Primary Education) and ensuing worldwide action. Mauritius too complied with the shift, taking a number of policy decisions which catapulted ECE to more prominence as seen in Chapter 1. With respect to the current study, I will examine how effectively policy translates into practice in relation to teaching English at pre-primary level. This will entail an in-depth analysis of key documents within the Mauritian context, namely:

(i)   *The National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary, 3-5 years* (2010); and

(ii)   Teacher education programmes for pre-primary teachers.

2.3.2 The *National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary* in Mauritius

The Mauritian *National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary* (NCF) establishes the driving philosophy of Early Childhood Education within the context of educational reform and in response to initiatives enunciated by The Dakar Framework for Action (2000). Communication, language and literacy represent one of the six learning areas in the NCF. It is described as one of the most important areas due to the intricate link between language and cognitive development in the early years. The aim of the curriculum in relation to language learning is to enable the learners to:

> "acquire language skills for effective communication and meaningful interaction with self and others through listening, speaking, reading and writing." (*National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary*, 2010, p. 3)

Given the affective and cognitive importance of the mother tongue, the latter is presented as a springboard for learning other languages taught at school. While it is recognised that the multi-lingual environment in which the children evolve constitutes an asset for second or third language learning, it is posed as a challenge for teachers who must "cautiously introduce and familiarise children with the target language/s through constant communication and meaningful activities like play, storytelling and simulation" (ibid., p. 42). Language descriptors and performance indicators point to what the children

should have acquired by the end of years 1 and 2 of pre-primary schooling. These pertain to:

- Communicating with others;

- Developing and demonstrating appropriate listening skills;

- Sharing and relating to others;

- Building and extending vocabulary and showing interest in new words;

- Engaging in speech audibly, with clarity and confidence;

- Acquiring and developing the reading skills;

- Demonstrating early writing skills;

- Engaging in speech audibly, with clarity and confidence; and

- Engaging in creative output.

 (Adapted from: *National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary,* 2010, pp. 44-47).

(See detailed language descriptors in Appendix iii.)

The pre-primary teacher is attributed prime significance in enabling learning. As such, s/he is expected to carry out a number of functions: be a good communicator in order to act as a model; plan and implement activities meant to develop communication, language and literacy; carry out meaningful activities such as play and storytelling; and use strategies that cater for the needs of all learners. Moreover, the teacher is expected to:

> "act as the initiator, motivator, guide and facilitator in the development of language, communication skills and early literacy of the child, and to devise and implement lessons to enhance the language skills of the children in a systematic way." (ibid., p. 47).

Assessment is to be carried out through observation principally, checklists, anecdotal records and a portfolio to document the learners' progress.

An overview of the NCF reveals sound theoretical foundations in relation to language teaching in a multi-lingual context. The recognition of the importance of the mother tongue in overall cognitive development and the learning of additional languages is in line with what is currently advocated. For instance, Smidt (1998, p. 55) contends that:

> "Young children will learn more effectively when they are able to build on what they already know. Children who have a language other than English have already acquired this language– in some cases more than one language! They understand how this language works and are able to use it for thinking. Forcing young children to abandon their first language in order to learn English is both insensitive and damaging."

From a similar position, Whitehead (2004) brings out the importance of first language support in relation to children's learning and cognitive development, their self-esteem and confidence, their linguistic and cultural identity, as well as their development and achievements as potential bilinguals. On their part, Barratt-Pugh (2000) and Prierto (2009) argue in favour of first language maintenance which develops the bilingual learners' metalinguistic abilities and allows for positive transfer thereby enhancing the learning process.

Similarly, teaching strategies recommended by the NCF are in line with what is considered to be appropriate for young learners. Play-based approaches that enable the active participation of learners are favoured to a formal curriculum (Kirsch, 2006). Additionally, the centrality of talk for language development calls for strategies that make provision for talk and interaction (Smidt, 1998). As the author points out:

> "An early years curriculum is about more than content; it is about the context in which learning takes place. This means that the process is just as important as the outcome." (ibid., p. 41).

And yet, a striking shortcoming in the NCF is that it presents a single curriculum and set of descriptors for all languages taught. In doing so, the NCF overlooks the learners' and teachers' multi-lingual profile. It fails to acknowledge that, in such a context, both the teachers' and learners' mother tongue and their mastery of different languages are bound to vary. It expects the pre-primary teacher to display an equal level of fluency in all languages taught in order to act as a model and, similarly, it expects the language learner to attain the same degree of proficiency in all languages. It does not consider how far the lowly qualified pre-primary teachers, often with limited fluency in English, are capable of enacting the curriculum. This places the teachers at the interface between policy and practice, having to mediate a curriculum they may not be equipped to implement in a classroom constituting learners with varied linguistic profiles. Thus, while at the macro level, broad policy strokes establish expected outcomes, at the micro level there is no enabling framework that supports the teachers in meeting these. As Mattson and Harley (2003, p. 285) argue, "the danger inherent in policy-making is that it can effortlessly reconcile on paper what cannot be reconciled in practice." Consequently, "policy on teachers' roles and competencies [is] out of step not only with teachers' professional identities but also with their personal and cultural identities" (ibid., p. 287). When applied to the Mauritian context, the position adopted by the NCF betrays a lack of consideration to the reality of contexts as well as to the relationship between different languages.

The discrepancy between the expected and what is feasible triggers the following questions which are at the crux of my study: How do teachers with varied linguistic profiles reconcile policy and practice? How do they "negotiate the tensions and contradictions sidestepped by the policy in their day-to-day classroom practice"? (ibid., p. 286). How far do they espouse and enact the curriculum? What teaching approaches do they opt for in teaching English? What guides them in their choice of approach?

2.3.3 Pre-primary teacher professional development

One means of empowering teachers is incontestably through professional development. Therefore, I will now turn to an examination of the three courses offered by the Mauritius Institute of Education to in-service pre-primary teachers, namely Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education, Teacher's Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Teacher's Diploma in Early Childhood Education. These stand as the qualifications that link progressively as more advanced forms of study. The duration of these programmes varies between one and two years and they are structured similarly. They constitute:

- Taught modules which aim at equipping trainees with knowledge of curriculum domains, educational theories and methodology for subject teaching;
- Practical sessions or teaching practice whereby trainees are initially guided and eventually evaluated on the basis of classroom teaching; and
- Project work through which trainees develop research skills.

(See Appendix iv a, b & c for outline of the Proficiency in Early Childhood Education, Teacher's Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Teacher's Diploma in Early Childhood Education programmes of the Mauritius Institute of Education.)

Since the driving force of these programmes is to equip teachers to implement the NCF, the various components are engineered around the six areas stipulated therein. There is provision for the development of educational, content and pedagogical knowledge. Practical work on the teaching site and the inquiry-based project cater for the development of teaching skills and reflective practice. The programmes thus appear to be premised on a sound conceptual foundation. However, the lacuna lies at the level of their conceptualisation, namely the adoption of what Zeichner (1983) and Hoban (2003) refer to as a behaviouristic model of learning. Indeed, the content is organized as discrete components and thus "provide student teachers with independent knowledge bases about teaching assuming that they will be accumulated and integrated by the learner" (Hoban, 2003, p. 8). As Hoban (ibid., p. 10)

expounds:

> "This approach presents the teacher education curriculum as a jigsaw puzzle and leaves it to students to integrate the content so that they have to construct their own 'big picture' of the educational landscape. Moreover, this piecemeal approach to teacher education does not embody the dynamics of a real classroom."

The lack of "connectedness" (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008, p. 72) in the components is further emphasised by the fact that these are serviced by different departments, since the organisational structure of the MIE comprises the School of Education Studies and various Schools for other subject disciplines. As such, educational theories and philosophies, curriculum studies and subject study are taught separately.

Additionally, the stipulated aims of these programmes, as seen below, reflect an overemphasis on the development on pre-established requisite skills, knowledge and attitude:

• **Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education:**

"The programme aims at providing trainee pre-primary educators with the knowledge, skills, and practices that will ensure the proper development of the children." (Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education handbook, 2012, p. 5).

• **Teachers' Certificate in Early Childhood Education:**

"The aims of [the TCECE] programme are to:
» Develop in trainee educators an understanding of the basic principles and practices of teaching and learning at pre-primary level;
» Equip the trainee educators with appropriate pedagogical knowledge, values and skills for effective teaching and learning process at pre-primary level;
» Enable trainee educators to create a stimulating learning environment and to nurture the pre-primary child's natural desire to learn;
» Promote in the trainee educators the love and the joy of caring for the pre-primary school children;
» Equip trainee educators with the knowledge, values and skills that help promote self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation and eagerness to communicate, think and create; and
» Help trainee educators to plan and implement the National Curriculum Framework." (Teachers'

Certificate in Early Childhood Education, 2013, p. 2).

• **Teachers' Diploma in Early Childhood Education:**

"The aim of the programme is to develop the proper skills, knowledge and attitudes of the pre-primary educators to face the challenges of teaching in a changing context." (Teachers' Diploma in Early Childhood Education, 2012-2013, p. 6).

The dominant mode of the Mauritian teacher development strategies is premised on the 'outside-in' mode of professional learning. It sees teachers as somehow deficit and need to be 'filled with the appropriate knowledge' that the policy makers believe is valuable. Such an approach promotes the notion of teacher knowledge as *received*. It disregards the personal knowledge and understandings of teachers and leaves little space for the promotion of "reflective inspection (and articulation of) individual beliefs, assumptions, and an examination of potential obstacles" (Zeichner, 1983, p. 87). On the other hand, a constructivist approach to conceptualising a teacher education curriculum upholds the view of *knowledge in construction*. Rather than conceiving teachers as blank slates, it creates opportunities for teachers to bring in and work with their own "history of educational experiences as students" (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). It builds upon teachers' notion of who is a teacher and what is teaching and thereby accord their professional education "with their own reflectively examined felt sense of what it means to be a teacher" (ibid., p. 56).

The other critique that can be directed towards the conceptualisation of the teacher education programmes is that it fails to consider the specificities of different teachers' classroom contexts and does not make any provision to accommodate these within the programme. The relevance of Timperley's (2008, p. 8) statement to this state of affairs is striking:

"In some educational jurisdictions, professional development takes the form of fixed programmes designed to develop particular knowledge and skills that have been identified as effective. While they may be based on sound research about student learning, such programmes are developed independently of the participating teachers' practice contexts and tend to have less impact on student outcomes than approaches that are context-specific. Context-specific approaches promote teaching practices that are consistent with the principles of effective teaching but also systematically assist teachers to translate those principles into locally adapted applications. By developing this kind of knowledge teachers can better solve identified issues about student outcomes in their particular teaching situations."

The same critique can be targeted at the components catering for language teaching within these

programmes. The focus is predominantly on equipping the teachers with a set of theoretical and practical skills to foster language development but there is no provision for teachers to reflect upon and plough in their own experiences of language learning and teaching (see Appendix v for sample module content, Teacher's Diploma Early Childhood Education programme, Mauritius Institute of Education). Furthermore, the language issue remains as problematic as it is in the NCF. Since the term "language" is used, it raises issues pertaining to which language(s) will be considered, what role will be attributed to the different languages and how the teaching of different languages will be dealt with in a common module. While there is an attempt to integrate the teaching of languages by dealing with both English and French in common modules, the fact that these modules are taught by tutors from the French and English departments may culminate in an exclusive focus on these two languages. This may be to the detriment of other languages the teachers may have or wish to use in the classroom. We can, for instance, note the blatant absence of Creole, the mother tongue of the majority of Mauritians, in the programme.

The conception of teacher education programmes in Early Childhood Education reflects certain pedagogical and linguistic biases driven by broader global and political agendas. As McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright (2008) point out, our concept of knowledge itself is defined through a political process whereby particular social groups owning the resources (the financial imperialists) are able to shape fundamental concepts. The international drive towards English as cultural and economic capital– which clearly evidences language learning as a political act (Johnson, 2001) – is duly echoed in the Mauritian context where, once again, the adoption of an 'outside-in' model becomes salient. The prominent status of this language in the local landscape reveals the "profoundly social, cultural, and political character of our understandings, including our understanding of 'teacher capacity'" (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 144). At one level, the soundness of such a political move to counter insularity in a small island context cannot be disputed since, as Martin and Bray (2011, p. 267) explain:

> "While the forces of globalization are not new to small states, their impact has become stronger because of increased international specialization of national chains and the need for small states to find niches in highly competitive and specialized markets."

Nevertheless, in instances, where the micro context of policy mirrors wider hegemonic forces, the language policy and the knowledge teacher education programmes promote may clash with the classroom reality and hence be to the detriment of both teachers and learners. We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that, when teachers feel ill-equipped despite professional training, they may be driven to

indulge in the "strategy of mimicry" (Mattson & Harley, 2003, p. 297) whereby they look compliant with the world view of the intentions of policy, but do not deeply value its rationale. Strategic mimicry thus acts as a buoy that keeps them afloat in the classroom.

Further, the marginalisation of the knowledge, skills, beliefs and dispositions that teachers bring with them to teacher education programmes may have a disruptive effect on the development of teachers' selves thereby resulting in their disempowerment. It heightens our awareness that the teachers' attempts to reconcile dissonances between their experience and the theoretical orientations they are expected to adhere to might not always be successful. The conceptualisation of the teacher education programmes subverts the very notion of teachers' growth as a "life-long phenomenon" (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 135) in that it lacks "opportunities for L2 teachers to make sense of … theories in their professional lives and the settings where they work" (Johnson, 2006, p. 240). It also fails to acknowledge the "insider knowledge that includes the complex and multilayered understandings that teachers possess as natives to their work settings" (ibid., p. 241). There is inadequate consideration of the fact that "[P]rofessional development emerges from a process of reshaping teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods, or materials on teachers" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 7).

Yet again, we are faced with a series of questions which my study endeavours to address: How do educational policies balance the insular/global dimensions in small island states? How do teachers reconcile theory with practice, especially in the context of a predominantly 'outside-in' model of education? In such circumstances, how far what is taught to teachers gets caught by them? What drives their teaching in the classroom? What explains their pedagogical choices? It is deemed that an understanding of how teachers' practices develop in the circumstances discussed above may provide valuable insight to teachers, teacher educators and policy makers.

Section 4: Conceptual framework

My study examines the way in which teachers' biographical experiences of learning English shape their conceptions of the language and their pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education. The literature perused provided me with a more holistic notion of the phenomenon under investigation. It has revealed the shift in research from what teachers *do* to what they *know* and *what informs* this knowing (White & Moss, n.d). It has further brought out that teachers' "individual epistemologies" (Tirri, Husu & Kansanen, 1999, p. 911) are produced over time and in different spaces. By revealing that teacher

learning is not acquiring knowledge but acquiring identity (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005), the literature perused has pointed to the inextricable bond between teachers' knowings and teacher identity formation; it has shown that 'we are what we teach' and vice versa. This dawning understanding has assisted me in the production of the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 whereby I attempt to capture the multiple dimensions impacting upon teacher's evolving selves. This conceptual framework served as a temporary lens that guided the design of the research, the production of the instruments and the analysis of the data. The initial lens was refined in a model developed in the post analysis phase following added insight into the phenomenon after the study had been undertaken.
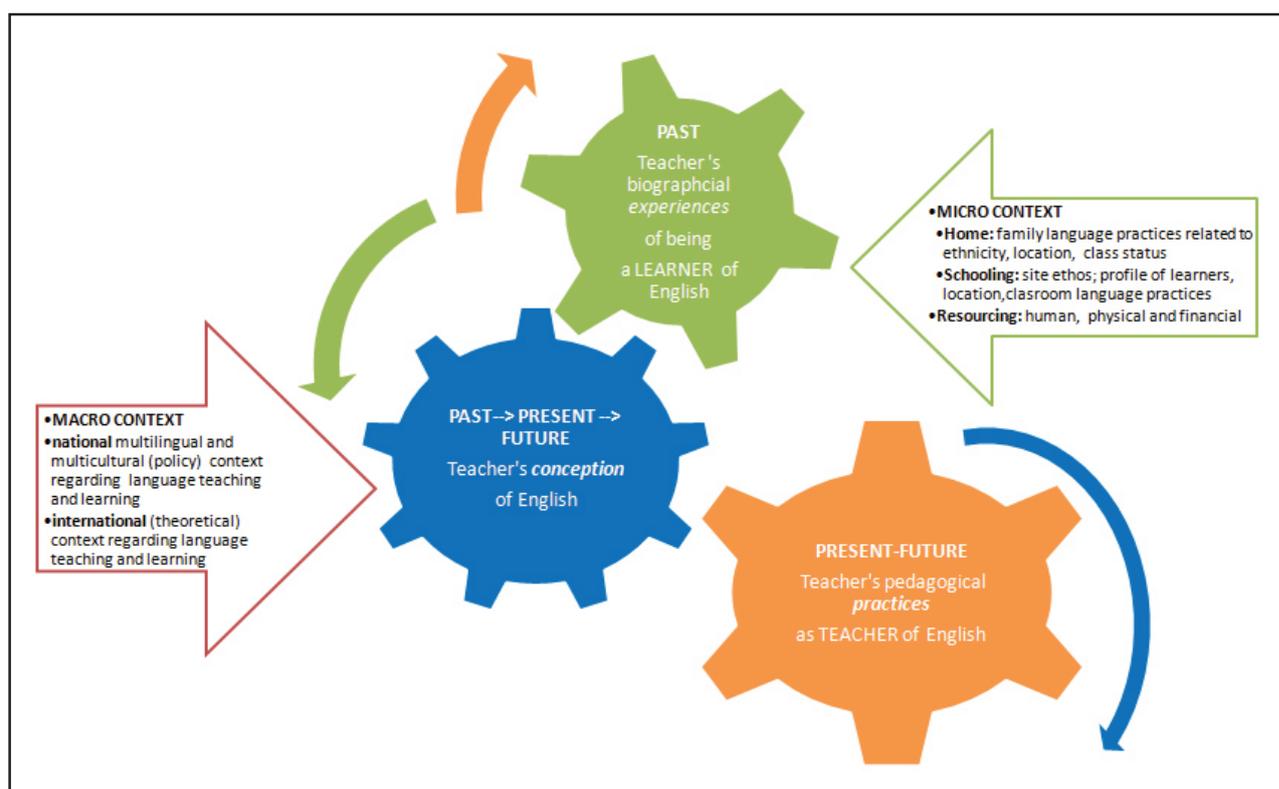
Figure 1: Conceptual framework: an initial lens

The model depicted in Figure 1 illustrates the link between the three focal points under scrutiny, namely teachers' biographical experiences of learning English, their conceptions of English and their pedagogical practices. It highlights the way in which the teachers' experiences of learning English shape their conceptions of the language which, in turn, influences the way they teach it. The inter-relational flow of influences among these three elements brings out their temporal nature and the way in which they act upon one another. It reveals that, as teachers' experiences of the English language vary over time, so do the ways in which they conceive of it and teach it.

The types of experiences teachers have are determined by the macro and micro contexts within which they are nested. As Johnson (2006, p. 245) states:

> "Context is not necessarily limited to specific geopolitical boundaries but can be sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and socioeconomic contexts that shape and are shaped by local and global events."

Teachers' professional development and practice take place in an ever-changing socio-political and socio-economic context and is subject to macro influences emanating from the national and international spheres. While theoretical orientations in the educational field are driven by international initiatives, these are implemented at the national level through policy decisions. However, the interplay of factors from the local context impact upon the implementation process. In Mauritius, as shown in chapter 1, the multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment is an inescapable consideration with respect to policies on language teaching.

The micro context differs from individual to individual and makes for the uniqueness of one's experiences. It constitutes:

- The **home** where family language practices are related to factors such as ethnicity, location and status;
- **Schooling** which takes place within a distinct site ethos dependent on such aspects as the profile of learners, location and classroom language practices; and
- **Resourcing,** namely human, physical and financial, in the institutional contexts where teachers practice.

It emerges that teachers' conceptions of English are seen to lie at the intersection of biography, history and society (Reissman, 2000). The model highlights the role of time and context in shaping the teachers' biographical experiences. It prompts a consideration of teachers' experiences in relation to the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, which are temporality, sociality and place (Clandinin & Huber, in press). Temporality refers to different points in time, namely the past, present and future; sociality refers to the conditions and milieu within which experiences and events unfold; and place refers to the physical location where events take place. An understanding of teachers' conceptions of English and their influence on the way they teach it thus prompt us towards an examination of their experiences of learning English:

(i)   At different points in time: childhood, adolescence, adulthood etc (temporality);
(ii) With respect to different people: family members, teachers, learners etc (sociality); and
(iii) In different settings: home, school etc (place).

Tirri, Husu & Kansanen (1999) posit that, while it is acknowledged that teachers' practical knowing is derived from personal experiences and are very useful and powerful, "this knowing is usually not made explicit" (p. 911). The authors' view, namely that practical knowing is "idiosyncratic and unique to the individual teacher" (ibid.) points to the close connection between epistemology and ontology, and hence to the need for appropriate methodology when engaging in studies on teacher identity. Of the studies that have been conducted, those carried out through life history research (e.g., Samuel, 1998; Kooy & de Freitas, 2007; Gratch, 2001; Johansen, 2002; Johnson, 2002; and Robinson, 2002) are, to me, richer and more revealing as they unpack the layers of experience that lead to teachers' knowing. This dimension is highly significant as it underscores the uniqueness of every individual's journey. Additionally, it uncovers teachers' thinking as a way of justifying the beliefs that have been derived from these experiences. Life history research thus stands out as being an effective method to investigate teacher identity. The choice of this approach will be further elaborated upon in the following chapter.

Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the way in which biographical experiences are involved in the development of teacher identity. It has shown that teacher identity development is negotiated in various formal and informal sites in an ongoing process. While the spectrum of factors that impact upon this process was highlighted, emphasis was also laid on the significance of teacher agency in teachers' *becoming*. The chapter has also stressed the way in which the development of teacher knowledge and teacher identity are intertwined. It emerged that teacher identity is shaped as teacher knowledge is constructed. Teaching is thus an enactment of one's teaching philosophy in the classroom. The chapter then delved into Early Childhood Education, analysing the way in which international decisions trickled down to local policy-making and how this impacted on the sector, especially teachers. Further, the chapter foregrounded a number of questions that are relevant to my study. By drawing my attention to the schism between policy and practice and also between theory and practice, it has urged me towards the investigation of formal and informal influences that determine teachers' understandings of themselves and of teaching and learning, and hence shapes their pedagogical practices. Finally, the chapter presented the conceptual framework designed to assist me with data production and analysis. It also pointed to the choice of life history approach as the most effective research methodology for the purposes of my study.

The next chapter elaborates on and discusses the research methodology. It provides a detailed account of the processes in which I engaged to generate and analyse the data.

Chapter 3

Research methodology: charting the route

Introduction

Whilst the scene has been set, the relevant literature surveyed and conceptual framework developed, it is necessary to envisage pathways that will enable me to select participants as well as generate and analyse the data in order to develop an understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The literature has provided me with an insight into effective research approaches that will allow me to delve into the lives of teachers and examine the ways in which their biography influences language pedagogy in their classrooms. Moreover, it has equipped me with theoretical know-how to develop the conceptual framework that will act as a road map and guide me through my study. This chapter, which stands as the kernel of my thesis, marks the point at which I take the dive…

Orientation to this chapter

The present chapter charts out the route adopted while undertaking the study. It comprises three sections in which details pertaining to the research design and methodology are spelt out. It also brings out the complexity of engaging in life history research, the dilemmas I encountered and the decisions I eventually took. The basis of these decisions is also discussed.

Section 1 states and justifies the research design and maps out the research methodology opted for with respect to the critical questions. The decision to engage in life history research and use narrative inquiry as research methodology is explained with reference to insights brought about by the literature.

Section II describes the steps taken to activate the study. The choice and profile of the participants are explained and the data production plan, illustrating the different phases of the study, is provided. The choice and design of instruments for data production are justified and described. Research protocols and ethical considerations are also brought out. Unexpected but significant issues that emerged with respect to language use and how they were tackled are highlighted.

Section III focuses on the data analysis phase; the procedure used for processing, organising, analysing and interpreting the data obtained is detailed therein.

Section 1: The research design

This study is qualitative in nature and explores the impact of teachers' biographical experiences on their pedagogical practices. Based on the ontological stance that there is no single truth as multiple realities exist, the study situates itself within an interpretivist paradigm. As the choice of any paradigm is bound to rest on its fitness for purpose, the interpretivist paradigm, here, is deemed to be an effective means of achieving an enhanced understanding of teachers' practices since:

> "Interpretive practice engages both the 'hows' and the 'whats' of social reality; it is centred both in how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds and in the configuration of meaning and institutional life that informs and shapes their reality- constituting activity." (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 488).

This paradigm allows the emergence of 'other' or 'alternative' perspectives. It does not rest on predetermined notions but, rather, privileges new ways of 'seeing' and understanding. The selection of the research approach is thus a key feature of the study, since allowing multiple truths to emerge can only happen when the participants are given the opportunity to voice out their experiences and interpret their lived reality. As Quaye (2007, p.4) claims, "Multiple truths exist given the diversity of perspectives and interpretations of participants". In the forthcoming section, I explain and discuss my methodological choices.

3.1.1 Engaging in life history research

My endeavour to discover multiple truths prompted me to opt for life history research which, as the literature has brought out, would help to open the door to the world of the participants, as they perceived it. In addition to being a theoretical analysis with storytelling being the means through which the researcher can develop deeper insight into the complexity of the phenomenon being explored, life history research allows participants to shape and relate their stories. The emphasis is on the participants' interpretation of what they have lived. These stories are, however, not mere renderings of lives as a series of events but rather, of lives that have been interpreted and made textual (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). As Sosulski, Butchanan and Donnell assert (2010, p. 37):

> "Life story techniques introduce the opportunity to collect rich data textured by respondents' own interpretations of their experiences and the social circumstances in which their story has unfolded, and the ways in which they continue to be active agents."

With subjectivity and positionality being privileged (Reissman, 2000), the focus, then, is not on the events themselves but on the participants' understandings of these (Kouritzin, 2000). What better way is there of understanding how people *see* and *understand* the world and how they *represent* themselves in its midst than by studying their lives told in their own voice?

Following my choice of the approach, I opted for narrative inquiry as the research methodology as it would allow me to generate rich data on the phenomenon being studied. Clubbing life history with narrative inquiry became an obvious choice because, as stated by Hatch and Wisniewski (1995, p. 116):

> "Understanding individual lives or individual stories is central to the research process and products of life history and narrative … Individual lives are the unit of analysis of life history work and individual stories are the stuff of narrative analysis."

Narrative inquiry now stands as one of the most popular methodological choices undoubtedly because, as stated by Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p. 17), "if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively". Knowledge construction is situated. Narrative inquiry captures the dialectical relationship between individuals, spaces or contexts, and time, and thereby affords a better insight into the multi-layered and complex process of identity development. As Plummer (2001, p. 395) opines:

> "To tell the story of a life may be one of the cores of culture, those fine webs of meaning that help organize our ways of life. These stories− or personal narratives− connect the inner world to the outer world, speak to the subjective and the objective, and establish the boundaries of identities (of who one is and who one is not). Life stories cross the embodied and emotional 'brute being' with the rational and irrational 'knowing self'."

As my aim was to bring out the nuanced meanings of teachers' lives, I chose narrative inquiry as research methodology for a number of reasons, namely:

(i) Evocative of the *bildungsroman*[7], narrative inquiry proves to be a versatile means of investigating a gamut of topics in relation to teacher identity, for instance, memory work (Tobias, 2012); stories of success (Pillay & Govinden, 2007); professional development (Latta & Kim, 2010); experiences of exclusion in school (Glazzard & Dale, 2012); and, of more relevance to my study, the

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[7] Class of novel derived from German literature that deals with the formative years of the main character, whose moral and psychological development is depicted.(Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Retrieved 3 August, 2012, from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bildungsroman)

connection between language learning and the development of individuals' personal and professional identities (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2009). Narrative inquiry would then surely assist me in investigating the link between teachers' experiences of language learning and their pedagogy by providing an insight into the various dimensions (persons, spaces, time) of the participants' lives that are connected to language learning.

(ii) Given the *situatedness* or *embeddedness* of knowledge construction, it is essential for researchers exploring teachers' *knowing* to foreground the context. It is premised that insight into teachers' "personal practical knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3) is best understood in the light of their biographic experiences since "their teaching is grounded in their personal resources, values, and life experiences" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 364). Here too narrative inquiry finds its relevance (Stephens & Trahar, 2012; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007) as it enables the story teller (be it the researcher and/or the 'researched') to situate the chain of events and formulate insights with respect to the complex chronicle of events that life constitutes.

(iii) Since we lead "storied lives", (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 145), I was of the view that through narrative inquiry, biographical experiences would be more easily evoked and distant memories would resurface. This belief was confirmed when, many a times, the participants' themselves expressed surprise at the memories that emerged in the course of the interviews.

(iv) This methodology, I also believed, would permit me to foreground teachers who are crucial agents in the educational sphere. While I turned my researcher lens towards a group of persons belonging to the same category, namely teachers, the chosen methodology allowed them to retain their individuality as "human actions are unique" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7) and experiences subjective. This epistemological position linked up effectively with the interpretivist research paradigm within which this study situates itself. Narrative inquiry prizes individual voices − as brought out by Andrews (2012, p. 34):

"Stories do not come out of nowhere, nor do they simply represent experience or an event as it actually happened. Rather they are always a representation of that, and as such are a very rich means for accessing inner truths, those ideas, beliefs and commitments which an individual holds dear."

Having put forth the reasons motivating the choice of the research methodology, I will now turn to the data production process. My understanding of the life history method as one that privileges richness of data over quantity guided me in the process of data generation, especially with regard to the

number of participants. Moreover, the emphasis placed on the dialogical construction of meaning and on participants' agency in shaping their stories determined the nature of the interaction between the teachers and I . I thereby shook off all the positivist notions I might have harboured.

Section 2: Activating the study

3.2.1 Procedure, protocols and ethics

The procedure for gaining access to the schools, establishing contact with the participants and enlisting them on the study was as follows:

- In the first instance, ethical clearance was applied for and obtained at the level of the university committee (see ethical clearance document in Appendix vi).

- As soon as I had obtained the green light from the University, I studied the official list of pre-primary schools in Mauritius to apprise myself of the different categories of schools. I observed that they were as follows: government schools generally attached to a primary school, schools run by Municipal or Village Councils, schools attached to primary schools run by the Bureau de l'Education Catholique (BEC)[8] and private fee paying schools all of which were regulated by the Early Childhood Education and Care Authority (ECCEA). Government schools as well as those run by the Municipal or Village Councils adhered to the use of languages as stipulated by policy–as brought out in chapter 1 while private schools had either French, Creole or English as medium of instruction.

  A combined purposive and convenience sampling process was opted for in selecting schools. According to Denscombe (2011, p. 35), "Purposive sampling works where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data." With reference to the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, namely temporality, sociality and place (Clandinin & Huber, in press) and based on my prior knowledge (Denscombe, 2011) of the Mauritian context, I deliberately aimed at "maximal variation" (Flick, 2009, p. 122) of the teaching site (place). My aim was to bring out "the range of variation and differentiation" (ibid.) within the teaching context since I had no control over the other aspects of the participants'

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[8] BEC: "the executive office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port-Louis for its education services… [It] coordinates the administration of the primary RCA schools and the main policy directions of the catholic secondary schools with the collaboration of the other congregations…" (Retrieved 5 June 2012, from: http://www.bec-mauritius.org/bureau)

lives. I thus identified different schools with respect to type (government/ private), location (rural/ urban), profile of learners (social background) and medium of instruction (English/French/ Creole) for the study. However, convenience sampling conventions geared the choice of schools that were "easiest to access under given conditions" (ibid.); schools that were at a reasonable distance from my workplace were chosen as I did not want to spend too much time travelling. With participants at a convenient distance, it was easier to slot in meetings with them in my own work schedules so that I could carry out data production in keeping with my time frame.

- When the schools had been identified, I contacted the Heads of these institutions and explained my motivation for the study to them. I met no difficulties in being allocated a teacher from their school. With the exception of one Head who was not responsive, all the others were quite prompt in making necessary arrangements. I chose to replace the school with the unresponsive Head in order not to delay my study and replaced it with another school with a similar profile. To officialise the matter, letters were sent to all the Heads (see Appendix vii for template of letter to gate keepers). It must also be mentioned that a letter was addressed to the Director of the institution where I work as spending time in the field entailed being away from my workplace during working hours (see Appendix viii for letter to the MIE Director). Permission was readily granted to me.

- When I met the participants, I thanked them for having agreed to participate in my study. I then explained the nature and purpose of my study to them. I also made my expectations clear right from the start. They were assured that all information would be confidential, that they could refrain from giving information they did not feel comfortable sharing and that they could withdraw from the study at any point. They were also told that the narratives would be validated by them prior to their finalisation and that, even at this point, they could choose to cut out details they did not wish to include. Once the procedure had been clarified, the participants were requested to sign the informed consent form to officialise the contract binding us. (See Appendix ix for template of informed consent document.)

- As part of the ethical considerations, the real names of the participants, the persons mentioned in their story and the schools have not been given. Rather, pseudonyms have been used and any information likely to give them away has been left out. I must however admit

that, while this was quite easily done for the participants, it was less easily done for the schools. In a small island, some schools are readily recognisable due to their specificity. Masking this without downplaying the contextual factor ─ which was such a significant aspect of the study ─ was indeed challenging. However I opted to sacrifice the latter and to prioritise ethics which I deemed were a primordial consideration. It was my responsibility as researcher to respect my participants' trust and protect their identity.

3.2.2 Designating the participants

Six pre-primary school teachers were involved in the study: Sandy, Preety, Jyotee, Mala, Chantal and Francine. They constituted an interesting variation in terms of their age group, the number of years of experience, the school context and the profile of their learners. As life history research thrives on representing "subjectively meaningful experiences through time" (Hitchcock and Hughes, 2003, p. 185), the participants brought with them a diversity of biographical experiences that added to the richness of the data.

All the participants were women as, in Mauritius, all pre-primary teachers are women. They had between 2 to 30 years of teaching experience in the pre-primary sector. They were, at the time of the study, working in either BEC, private or government schools that were located in rural or urban areas. It must be pointed out that, given the small size of an island like Mauritius, rural and urban areas are proximate. Thus, while Summerside pre-primary school is located in a rural area, it is situated a few kilometres away from the capital. It admits children who come from around the island and whose parents wish them to be educated in an English medium school. Also, being located in a rural area does not by any means diminish the prestige of private schools. Parents who can afford to send their children to these schools are even prepared to travel the distance. On the other hand, while Les *Gentils Dauphins*[9] pre-primary school is situated in an urban area, it is attended by children from the working class. Its intake is influenced by its adherence to the use of the mother tongue for instructional purposes, hence the predominant use of Creole. The location and profile of the school emerged as interesting variables with respect to the issue of language and social class and I was interested in understanding how far these factors determined the pedagogical practices of the teachers. The participant and school profile sheet below provides an overview of the selected participants and their location. The participants are arranged in relation to the number of years of teaching experience, starting with Sandy who is the least experienced.

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[9] (French name) The kind dolphins.

Name of participant; teaching experience	Name of school; location	Category	Feeder school to	Children's family background	Languages spoken by children
Sandy; 2 years[10]	Summerside; rural	Private; English medium	Summerside	Upper middle and high classes	English French Creole (few)
Mala; 12 years	*Les Gentils Dauphins;* urban	Private; run by an Association	Government schools	Working class	Creole mostly
Preety; 15 years	Ladybird; rural	Government	Ladybird primary school	Working and middle classes	French Creole
Jyotee; 20 years	*Jardin, d'Enfants[11]*; urban	Private; French medium with English stream	Private schools	Upper middle and high classes	English French
Chantal; 22 years	*Les Petits Lutins[12]* ; urban	Private; French medium	Private and government schools	Middle and upper middle classes	French, English, Creole
Francine; 30 years	*St Gabriel*; rural	BEC	*St Gabriel* primary School	Working and middle classes; Broken families	French Creole

Table 2: Participant and school profile sheet

Having established contact with my participants and secured access to the schools, I was able to embark on the next stage, namely data production. It must be pointed out that I did not wait to settle on all the participants in order to start generating the data as that would have slowed down the process. The two were in fact carried out concurrently and this permitted me to proceed in a systematic manner without being overwhelmed with data from or meetings with too many participants at a go. I found that working with two participants at a time was more manageable.

3.2.3 Data production

Data production spanned over a period of six months, namely from February 2012 to July 2012. Slight adjustments were made to the initial plan as I went along. For instance, delays sometimes occurred due to unforeseen events or unavailability of the participants; the duration of the interviews varied

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[10] This excludes the two years during which she was attached to a mentor.
[11] (French name) Children's garden.
[12] (French name): The little elves.

according to the time the participants were able to give me; the artifacts also varied with respect to the participants as some were more predisposed to providing these. On the whole, I was able to stick to my plan. The section below will elaborate on the tools used for data production.

3.2.3.1 Tools for data production

The method for data production was devised in line with the critical questions (See Appendix x for data production plan). The tools were chosen and designed according to the type of data required. Since the focus was on the participants' experience of learning English, the primary tool for data production was biographical interviews. However, because the research aimed at obtaining a better insight into their pedagogical practices, the interviews were supplemented with classroom observations, informal conversations prior to and post observation, field notes, photographs and artifacts. The use of a plethora of tools helped me to create a three- dimensional representation of the participants rather than obtain a narrow perspective. It was expected that gathering data from several sources would assist me in answering the final question and explain the teachers' pedagogical practices during the analysis phase.

The choice, design and administration of the different tools in the course of the study will now be detailed.

(i) Biographical narrative interviews

Biographical interviews constituted the main source of information about the participants and rightly so since "considerable freedom can be given to the subjects to respond and talk in ways they wanted to about issues they wanted to, prompted by the researcher's general concerns" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2003, p. 193). Three interview schedules were designed, each focusing on the participants' experiences of learning English during a specific phase of their lives, namely home, schooling and post schooling (see interview schedules 1-3 in Appendix xi).

Piloting the interview schedule

Prior to the implementation, the interview schedules were piloted. A pre-primary teacher I was closely acquainted with was chosen on the basis of her experience in the field and also for convenience. The pilot study brought to my attention a number of issues that I had not anticipated. These, interestingly, had

nothing to do with the design of the schedules, the nature of the questions or their phrasing, but with my interviewing techniques, particularly my exclusive focus on the English language and the medium of communication during the interview, as discussed below.

As far as my interview techniques were concerned, being deeply influenced by Wengraf (2004), I kept my interventions minimal at first, believing that I simply had to set the interview context and purpose for the participant to deliver a neat narrative of her life. However, I soon realised that I would have to put aside my rigid stance and engage more closely with the participant if I wanted to trigger the distant and dormant − and also as I eventually realised, private − memories which were so crucial to my study. Thus, I no longer refrained from prompting, probing and questioning further. The conversational approach adopted had immediate positive results. Moreover, it did not take me long to understand that people cannot sift their memories to extract too specific information regarding language use, especially when these deal with remote events. My questions, which were geared towards the participant's experiences of the English language, ended up making the latter more confused. I realised that it was not possible to deal exclusively with English when operating in a multi-lingual context. Rather, I would have to consider language experiences as a whole (which meant all the languages used) and gradually zoom in on English by picking up on what was being said. The questions in my interview schedules were reformulated accordingly.

Conducting interviews in a multi-lingual context is dealt with in more detail in the section below because, in addition to language being the phenomenon under my lens, it became one of the salient features of my methodology. Though it was brought to the fore during the pilot study, the ensuing interviews revealed how important a consideration it is for researchers operating in such a context.

Conducting the interviews

The number of interviews per participant varied between two and three as the duration of each depended on the availability of the participants and on the gaps that had to be filled. The duration of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one-and-a-half hours. All the interviews were audio recorded with the

permission of the participants. Though interview schedules had been produced prior to the study and refined after being piloted, I soon put them aside while interacting with the participants. It was essential to make the participants at ease because I believed it was crucial for them to be relaxed and to trust me in order to confide with someone who was, in fact, a complete stranger. Thus, during the first interview

itself, I refrained from casting frequent glances at the schedule in order to maintain eye contact and a natural flow in what had become a conversation. I allowed myself to be guided by the participants in order not to disrupt the recollection process.

As I went along conducting interviews, I developed confidence and my reliance on the schedule decreased. The schedule was nevertheless a useful tool that allowed me to keep on track and gauge how far I had covered issues identified. However, I kept an open mind and admitted information that had not been anticipated while conceptualising the research design and this tool because it brought significant data with respect to the research phenomenon. I understood that such adjustments and modifications are necessary since it is advisable that narrative research be loosely designed for its effective implementation (Josselson, 2007). This does not by any means diminish the role of the researcher. Instead, in line with research in social sciences, the researcher is transformed into a "sympathetic listener, friend, colleague and fellow human being" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2003, p. 193). The shift towards "empathetic interviewing" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696) had been an unforeseen, gradual but effective move. Such a stance sits well with the interpretivist paradigm adopted for my study. These multiple roles are also essential in order to deal with stories of death, divorce, struggle, rejection and alienation − the harsher and highly private aspects of life that I had not expected to hear about when dealing with language experiences. On listening to my participants' stories, it dawned upon me that language permeates every aspect of our lives from the time of birth, which explained why unanticipated events were an integral part of their recollections.

Interviewing in a multi-lingual context

The interviews carried out during both the pilot phase and main study compelled me to review my assumptions about language use when conducting an interview in multi-lingual contexts. I had to admit that, though the participants' experiences of the English language constituted the core of my study, I could not turn a blind eye to other languages that are currently used. In milieus where people constantly switch from one language to another with respect to audience, situation and purpose, it is not possible to segregate the different languages in use.

During the pilot study, my interviewee mentally recoiled the moment I shifted to English. It was obvious from her sudden silence, the uncertain expression on her face and hesitant response in French, eventually, that she was not as comfortable as she had been a while back when we had been chatting casually in Creole, the language we usually communicated in. To be honest, I was not that

comfortable either after the language shift. I attributed this to the fact that we were not in the habit of speaking English with each other. I thus shifted back to Creole in order to pursue the interview. It did not strike me that I might have the same reaction from my participants because I believed I would be dealing with people I was not familiar with. Also, having read about the problematics of transcribing and translating given that language is both value and meaning- laden (this matter will be dealt with later in this section), I preferred to stick to English to avoid eventual complications.

With hindsight, I realise that my stance was naïve. Albeit my assumptions about language use, I had also taken for granted that, since my participants were teachers, they would have at least a relative degree of fluency in English. The fact that three participants, namely Francine, Mala and Chantal were obviously ill at ease with the language, even if they taught it, spoke volumes. Francine struggled to express herself in English (see Appendix xii for an extract from interview 1). Mala shifted to and communicated extensively in Creole despite her wish to speak English (see Appendix xiii for an extract from interview 1 with Mala). Chantal, right from the start, expressed her preference for French though she was fluent in English. While I could understand that Mala's and Francine's difficulty to communicate in English resulted from their lack of proficiency, I was intrigued by the fact that Chantal's fluency in English was superseded by her ease in French in determining the medium of communication. Until then, it had been my belief that individuals who are fluent in a language would have no qualms about using it. The participants' attitude towards the English language was becoming apparent even before they openly spoke about it. This became one of the key moments as I undertook my study.

(ii) Classroom observation

Non-participant classroom observation was carried out after the interviews. Three sessions were devoted to each participant. Observations were scheduled at different times of the day so that patterns of language use and teaching strategies during the conduct of different activities could be noted.

Though observation was a secondary tool, it was vital in the study. Given the significance of context in life history research, observation was an appropriate tool to gather data on the different types of setting, namely physical, human, interactional and programmatic (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

Seeing the participants in action also revealed how they managed their role as teachers and how they mobilised their personal and professional capital in their pedagogy. The classroom was thus not only the place where professional knowings were played out but also where the interface between personal

knowledge and professional knowledge took place. The data thereby obtained enabled me to flesh out the participants' words and produce rounded characters while composing the narratives. I understood that:

> "Thinking narratively – beginning with people's experiences and their lives rather than with theory, immersing oneself and living in the midst of participants' lives rather than conducting short-termed, drop-in (and –out) studies, and developing understanding in relationship with those having the experience – are essential qualities/methods of a narrative inquiry." (Phillion, 2002, p. 553).

Through focused observation (Angrosino, 2005), data pertaining to language use and teaching was recorded. The classroom was described with an emphasis on the language in the visual displays and resources (see details from classroom observation noted in Appendix xiv). Entries were made on the observation schedules with respect to:

- Language used by both teachers and learners;
- Purpose for which specific languages were used by both teachers and learners;
- Teaching strategies;
- Other observations like languages used with colleagues or parents;
- Occurrences that struck me, that I may not have anticipated but that appeared relevant; and
- Issues that required clarification from the participants.

Entries were made in the order in which they occurred. The data was then reorganised according to each language used, that is, English, French and Creole. This type of categorisation was highly effective and shed light on the functions attributed to each language in daily interaction. Trends in these attributions by the different participants could then be compared.

(See Appendix xv for observation schedule template and Appendix xvi for a sample of the reworked observation schedule 1 for Preety.)

(iii) Informal conversations

Data generated from informal conversations supplemented that obtained through other tools. Informal conversations took place prior to the observation sessions in order to apprise myself of the lesson that would ensue. Post observation conversations were helpful in bringing about clarifications required in relation to specific elements. This was of utmost importance as I did not want to impose my interpretation on the events or actions but understand them from the participants' perspective. At times, participants initiated these conversations because they wished to confide in me or share information

that they deemed would be useful for my study. These became prized moments for me as a researcher because they signalled that the participants trusted me and had attained an appreciable level of comfort with me. It became gratifying to see that barriers (here between stranger/teacher educator and teacher) had been transcended. The data obtained through informal conversations was entered into my researcher journal; longer conversations were audio recorded with the permission of the participants.

The dialogue between my participants and I allowed me to experience one of the salient features of life history research, namely the co-construction of knowledge with the participants ─ as opposed to the construction of knowledge about them in a uni-directional (and patronising) way. It explained why, in this research tradition, the term 'collaborators' (Altork, 1998) is preferred to 'subjects', 'participants', 'agents' or 'respondents'.

(iv) Photographs

The participants were encouraged to bring photographs as a means of jogging their memories while recollecting their past. Some participants brought these and they proved to be very useful in eliciting biographical information and understanding their world better. While all the photographs were not directly related to the learning of English, they marked significant moments in the lives or careers of the participants and thus led to a clearer idea of their lived experiences.

(v)   Artifacts

Artifacts here refer to printed documents that shed more light on the participants themselves and on their teaching. It is worth noting that, as in the case of the photographs, all the participants had been requested to bring any object or document that could potentially contribute to developing an insight into the topic being investigated. However, not all of them provided artifacts and I could not compel them to do so. The artifacts used and the type of data these provided are indicated in the table below. It is to be noted that, while the information served as a trigger for further probing` during the interviews and informal conversations, most of these artifacts have not been included in the thesis to preserve the participants' anonymity.

Artifact	Data produced
National Curriculum Framework and/or teaching programme implemented	Topics to be covered, skills to be taught, recommended teaching strategies, language use; participant's view on programme
Children's worksheets	Language use in classroom with respect to task
Letters from parents, testimonials from Heads or Inspectors	Professional standing
Form for the Pay Research Bureau[13] with details pertaining to responsibilities	Professional responsibilities and participant's perception of duties allocated to her
PowerPoint presentation on pedagogical approach used during workshop with colleagues	Philosophy underlying pedagogical orientation
Visual representation of metaphor to represent self as teacher	Notion of professional self

Table 3: Artifacts and data generated

As data was collected, it was systematically placed in a folder that had been created for each participant. This made for a gradual building up of the participants' dossier that facilitated retrieval during the analysis phase. In the ensuing section, I will elaborate on the procedure for data analysis.

3.2.3.2 Validity issues

Validity is the baseline of research that is meant to adhere to given standards of rigour in order to be credible and applicable to other contexts. This traditional notion of research is deeply anchored in the positivist paradigm (Vithal, 2009). Within the realm of qualitative research, however, generally researchers adhere to Auerbach & Silverstein's (2003, p. 77) stance, namely:

> "We believe, instead, that subjectivity, interpretation, and context are inevitably interwoven into every research project. Furthermore, we believe that these elements of research practice are essential and should not be eliminated even if it were possible to do so."

The authors suggest that reliability and validity be replaced by the concept of *"justifiability of interpretations"* (ibid., p.78) and generalisability by *"transferability of theoretical constructs"* (ibid.).

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[13] An independent institution that continuously reviews the salary, grading structure as well as conditions of service in the public sector.

Quantitative paradigms are also less weighty within the social science reformist community which includes narrative researchers (Polkinhorne, 2007) and which deems that:

> "there are important aspects of the personal and social realms that cannot be investigated within the limitations of what has been conventionally accepted as evidence and arguments used to justify or validate knowledge claims." (ibid., p. 472).

Indeed, in narrative research, concerns such as truth, representativeness and generalisability appear obsolete in the face of a methodology that is loosely designed, flexible and inductive (Josselson, 2007) to make space for emergent understandings. In this approach, therefore, we embrace concepts such as authorial honesty (Sikes, 2012); trust in the words of the participants (Beecham, 2009); fidelity to what events mean to participants (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995); and truth-value of the personal truths of participants (Kathard, 2009). Or, like Pillay (2009), who is dubious about empirical representations of data as if truth is singular, definite and neutral, we choose to emphasise "I-visibility"[14] (ibid., p. 50). In the same vein, 'validity' has transformed into a more elastic concept encompassing not less than eighteen types of validity (Cohen, Manion & Morrisson, 2007).

It is undoubtedly unrealistic to adhere to notions of objectivity in a research approach where meaning making is carried out through a dialogical process involving both the researcher and the participant. Moreover, this approach which privileges subjectivity, individualism and self-identity, defies attempts to generalise findings or establish representativeness. As Samuel (2009, p. 16) points out,

> "life history research presents an opportunity to its users to be able to think and look at the world for its blurry bits, its complexities and complications. The world is not capable of being reduced into simplicities. The writers of life histories should hope only to have presented fresh illuminations of the phenomenon being investigated."

In my study, therefore, I choose to go by 'authenticity' rather than 'truth'. The definition of 'truth' that I adhere to is 'being true to the interpretation of the tellers' and to my agenda as researcher. Consequently, further to acknowledging my positioning, validity checks are interspersed within the different stages of my study and carried out by:

- Clarifying doubts or seeking further information from participants during the data generation phase, as brought out in section 2.3.1 above;

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[14] When the researcher is data.

- Finalising the narratives in consultation with the participants;
- Ensuring analytical validity during the later phases of the analysis.

The latter two instances of validity check will be discussed in the forthcoming section.

Trustworthiness being a significant aspect of narrative inquiry, I ensured that this was upheld in the study through the use of multiple methods and multiple sources of data collection and analysis, thick engagement with context by engaging in classroom observation, and finalising the narratives with my participants to ensure that these aptly represented their lived experiences.

Section 3: Data analysis

In this section, I will describe the different phases of data analysis I undertook. This stage comprised three levels:

- Level 1 was devoted to narrative analysis, that is writing the storied narratives of the participants after the interviews had been transcribed;

- Level 2 entailed carrying out cross-case comparisons whereby the themes that had emerged in level 1, during narrative analysis, were examined in all the storied narratives to identify similarities and differences; and

- Level 3 focused on an in-depth analysis of cases that stood out from the rest due to their dissonances and that I term the 'un-typical'.

Figure 2, below, is a diagrammatic representation of the analytical framework and highlights the main steps of the process as I moved from the raw to refined data and thence to greater levels of abstraction.

Level 1:
Narrative analysis

- Transcription of interviews/translation/transliteration
- Colour coding of transcripts
- Construction of story maps
- Writing of narratives

Level 2:
Analysis of narratives

- Reduction of data: identification of themes
- Thematic analysis through cross-case comparisons
- Drawing initial conclusions

Level 3:
Analysing antithetical cases

- Identification of 'un typical' cases
- Case studies
- Drawing conclusions

Figure 2: Analytical framework

3.3.1 Level 1: Narrative analysis

The first stage of the analysis constituted composing the storied narratives and itself embedded a number of steps as I go on to detail. I choose to include the process of producing the interview transcripts in this stage of the analysis because, while transcription may appear to be a mere exercise of converting verbal utterances into the written form, the types of decisions that had to be taken in the process especially when it was a matter of translating and/or transcribing, as I discuss below, revealed that the analysis was well underway right from that stage. As Bamberg (2012, p. 54) indicates, "analysis begins the moment we adopt the reflective posture of *indwelling* as we listen to recordings of interviews to immerse ourselves in the data."

3.3.1.1 Transcribing the interviews

All the interviews were transcribed before I embarked on data analysis. The interviews conducted in English were transcribed faithfully and speech idiosyncracies, like hesitations, emphases and pauses, were indicated as these were very revealing of the participants' views, position, emotions and state of mind at particular moments (see Appendix xvii for an extract from interview 1 with Sandy). In narrative inquiry, it is not only what participants say that matters but also how they say it (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Bearing in mind that stories are an interpretation of what individuals have experienced, Reissman (2000) and Bamberg (2012) emphasise on the need to attend to the performative aspect of the storyteller (here the participant) during interviews as this is revelatory of the self that the speaker wants to project, that is how he or she wants to be 'seen'. It was therefore necessary to go beyond the words and be sensitive to all cues that were likely to shed light on the phenomenon.

Sentences, extracts or interviews in French and Creole had to be translated in view of catering for international readership as I was aware that all readers would not be conversant with all the languages we, Mauritians, commonly communicate in. As many researchers involved in multi-lingual set-ups wishing to retain the essence of the participants' words, I also faced interpretive dilemmas with regard to fidelity, equivalence, representation and interpretation (Temple & Young, 2004; Smith, Chen and Liu, 2008; Davidson, 2009; Beecham,2009; Regmi, Naidoo & Pilkington, 2010; Ross 2010). Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington (2010) effectively bring out the challenges in maintaining accuracy when representing people's views and perspectives especially when "there is apparent contradiction between valuing meaning ... and a desire to obtain conceptual equivalence" (ibid., p. 19). There were instances when I felt that a word for word translation would quash the essence of the experience being narrated

and which I so fervently wished to retain. Though the participants and I shared common languages (English, French, Creole), I still faced the difficulties of finding exact matches since cultural notions are not always easily conveyed to audiences who are unfamiliar with these. In fact, it is precisely because the participants – even Jyotee and Sandy who were fluent in English – could best convey meaning in French that they chose to code-switch at particular moments or to express themselves frequently in that language. Thus, while the interviews were translated as far as possible, transliteration[15] was used when exact or equivalent words could not be found.

Below is an extract from Mala's interview transcript that is used to illustrate issues with ensuring equivalence of propositional statements in multi-lingual contexts.

Mala: [original utterance in Creole] *"Li vre ki nou bizin koz Angle pou nou gagn li. Me li inpe fason lekol inn ansegne ki'nn fer nou* **degoute***: li tro akademik; inn nek met dan nou latet me nou pa'nn kapav asimile."*

[English version: "There is no doubt that we must practice English in order to master it but the way we were taught **alienated** us from the language: it was excessively academic with an emphasis on cramming — so much so that we not able to assimilate anything."]

In the *Diksioner Morisien* (Mauritian Dictionary) (2011), the word **degoute** is related to feelings of repulsion and of being fed up. 'Disgusted' would be a literal translation of the term *degoute* but inadequate in terms of the contextual portent, namely that we do not have a love/hate relationship with the English language; moreover it is too strong a term. *Disillusioned/disappointed* would be inappropriate too as they imply that learners have certain expectations – while this may not necessarily be true. The term *alienated*, that was finally chosen, is more appropriate as it denotes a growing rift between the language and the learners.

3.3.1.2 Writing the narratives

Following the production of transcripts, I turned to composing the narratives of my participants. I chose to write the narratives of five of the six participants, namely Sandy, Preety, Jyotee, Mala and

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[15] Regmi, Naidoo & Pilkington, (2010, p.18) define transliteration as "a process of replacing or complementing the words or meanings of one language with meaning of another as sometimes the exact equivalence or exact meaning might not exist".

Chantal. Their stories, as told to me, captured the essence of their lives, brought out a diversity of experiences related to learning English resulting from the micro and macro contexts and their respective personalities. They also mirrored a range of reactions and interpretations to similar experiences and showed how each person made sense of her experiences and forged her life in a way that mattered to her. On the other hand, Francine's story was left out. My decision to leave out Francine had a dual motivation. In the first instance, I was ruled by limitations of space. Since Francine's story had resonances with the other participants' stories, I deemed that I would not be losing valuable data related to the phenomenon. Secondly, Francine was the second participant I had interviewed and my first encounter with one who was neither confident nor comfortable speaking English. Despite my reassurance that she could express herself in the medium of her choice and though I frequently switched to French, I was not able to draw out as rich data as I had for the other participants.

Writing the narratives was fraught with dilemmas. Piecing together snippets from the transcripts into a fluid and coherent whole without distilling the voice of the participant and, at the same time, keeping the phenomenon under investigation into focus can be quite a challenging enterprise. As brought out so vividly in Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 147):

> "One of the researcher's dilemmas in the composing of research texts is captured by the analogy of living on an edge, trying to maintain one's balance, as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to tell of the participants' storied experiences and to represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices."

I deemed it crucial to respect the narrative authority (Clandinin & Huber, in press) of my participants and reflect the subjective nature of their experiences (as brought out in their biography) through the choice of an appropriate form. I had to attend to the participants' 'voice' and 'VOICE' in my attempt to capture the subtle way in which the multiple roles they assumed – the narrator narrating events, the interlocutor responding to me as interviewer, and the character quoting speakers from the narrated event (Koven, 2012) – were played out. I here distinguish between two types of voices: 'voice' stands for the individual's interpretation of events – because participants interpret their past from their present vantage (Clandinin & Huber, in press) – and the illocutionary intent of their telling. 'VOICE', on the other hand, refers to the type of language used by each person (stylistic features, medium of communication, switches to another medium etc). I considered the way in which language was used to be an integral part of the participants' identity and did not want to drown it with my own VOICE while narrating their story. The issue with VOICE is bound to strike any researcher (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kathard, 2009; Samuel, 2009), even more so one operating in a multi-lingual context.

In my case, as mentioned earlier, I interacted with participants with differing levels of proficiency or willingness to speak English. This element will be tackled at more length when I elaborate on stylistic choices made while writing the narratives.

The process of composing the narratives brought forth another set of dilemmas revealing that "attending to tensions is central to the relational aspects of composing field texts, as well as interim and final research texts" (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber & Orr, 2010, p. 81). Preety's narrative, which necessitated ten drafts before I attained a satisfactory version, marked my tottering steps into composing narratives. However, as I engaged further in the production of narratives, I gradually shed off my over-cautious stance, which arose from my fear of tampering with the data, and became more relaxed. Once I had understood that narrative analysis reflects the researcher's interpretation of the participants' experiences (Kathard, 2009; Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinhorne, 1995) writing the narratives became a thoroughly enjoyable process which allowed me to unleash my creative potential. I played around with several possibilities until I found a form that best reflected the meaning of each individual's experiences. Chantal's story, despite being the last one I attempted, remained a challenge. It was probably her multi-levelled experience as a teacher (dealing with pre-primary, primary and adult learners) that made it difficult to demonstrate her development through a set of chronological events. In writing her narrative, I initially produced 'blocks' constituting different sets of experiences and proceeded, as a child does, placing one building block at a time to find the most appropriate form. I experienced a process that Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 153) describe very effectively:

> "As the writing progresses, form changes and grows. There is an organic notion at work, a kind of developmental genetics of form. The writing itself makes a difference to the actual form of the final text. There is a kind of growth or development from rudimentary notions of form…to the form that is actually finalized in the written text."

The procedure adopted to transform data into the participants' stories will now be described:

- Each participant was given a pseudonym; this was not done at random but, instead, after careful consideration as the pseudonyms had to reflect, as far as possible, both the personality and ethnicity of the participants. If their personality was a salient feature of their individualism, their ethnicity influenced the languages they had predominantly been socialised in (Garcia, 2012, 2010). Both were seen as salient aspects of the participants' identity. The table that follows provides details about the process of pseudonym attribution to the participants. It is understood that this is based on my perception of them.

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Participant	Status	Ethnicity[16]	Personality	Justification for choice of pseudonym
Sandy	Upper middle class	Franco-Mauritian	Happy-go-lucky person with a sense of humour underlying which lay uncertainty and lack of confidence.	Name derived from the word 'sand', which represents exoticism, lightness but also an unstable ground to tread on.
Preety	Middle class	Indo-Mauritian	Jovial and friendly yet resolute.	Name focuses on physical features which conceals a staunch personality.
Jyotee	Middle class	Indo-Mauritian	Mature and has clear goals.	Name means 'light', here representing her unquenched thirst for 'the light of knowledge'.
Mala	Working class	Indo-Mauritian	Appears quiet and self-effacing but harbours determination to move on.	'Commonplace' name chosen to render her efforts to progress and her achievement all the more prominent.
Chantal	Middle class	Creole	Mature, self-assured yet able to come down to the level of the learners.	Name to reflect composure, willingness to come to level of children and penchant for French.
Francine	Middle class	Creole	Mature, strict	Name to reflect maturity and penchant for French.

Table 4: Attribution of pseudonyms to participants

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[16] In the Mauritian context, the term 'ethnic belonging' tends to be used instead of 'ethnicity'. It is usually associated with the language, religion and cultural traits of groups of people. This does not however preclude individuals from one group from knowing/ using the language(s) or assimilating the cultural traits of other groups.

- The transcripts were then scrutinised and colour-coded to highlight details pertaining to the participants' learning of English at different periods of their lives starting from their early childhood (see Appendix xviii for an extract from Jyotee's colour-coded transcript). Critical moments, that is turning points or epiphanies (Reissman, 2002), with respect to the phenomenon were highlighted. Audio recordings of the interviews were listened to again (and again, if required) to catch the alterations in tone which were indicative of feelings in relation to particular persons, issues or events.

- Based on my interaction with the participants and the pool of data from various sources, a story map was created to reflect the particularity of each individual's biographical experiences. This allowed me to align form with meaning, that is come up with a structure that reflected the experience of the respective participant. For instance, Sandy's story map was designed to reflect a vicious circle due to her unresolved identity crisis. The cartoon characters included were taken from her transcripts and reflected particular traits while Alice (from the story *Alice in Wonderland*) represented how I viewed her.
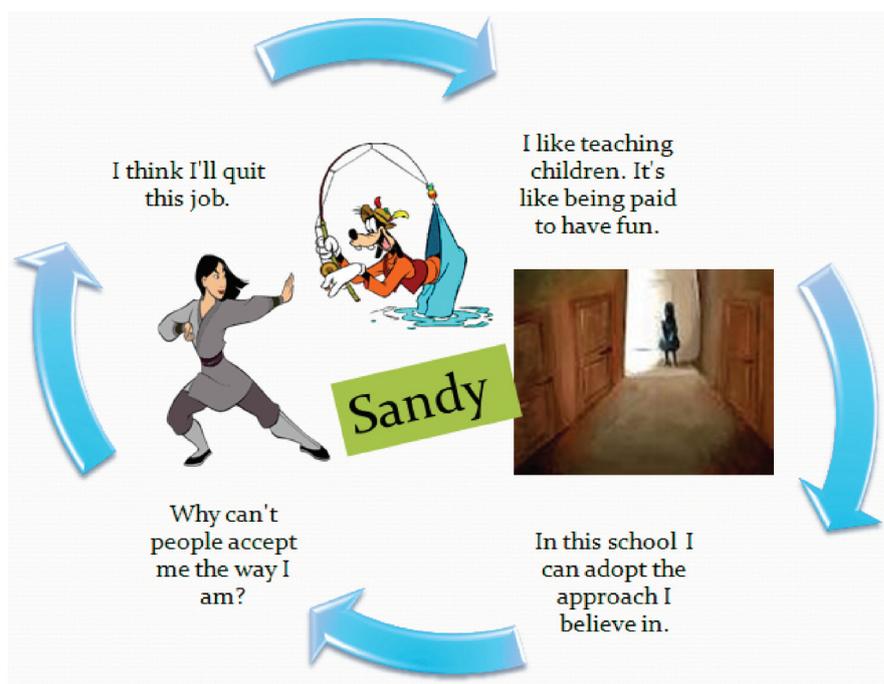
Figure 3: Sandy's story map

Jyotee's story map, on the other hand, reflected the way in which she had rallied learning experiences from a range of contexts and time spans. These converged towards her encounter with her student Maiba who propelled her towards the turning point in her pedagogical approach.
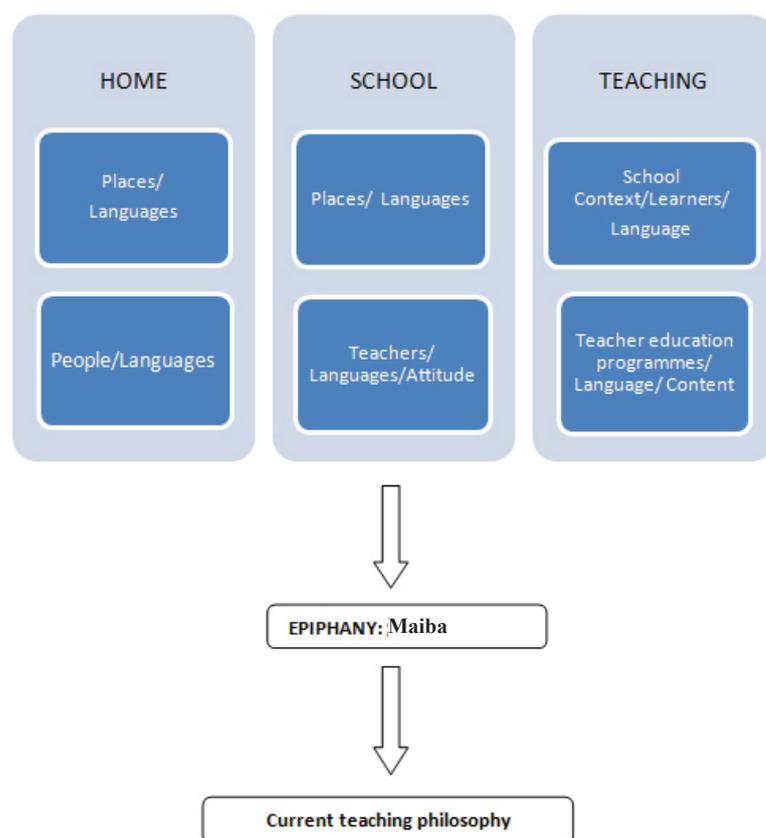
Figure 4: Jyotee's story map

- Colour-coded extracts from the transcripts were then arranged according to the structure of the narrative. Sub-headings established the driving theme of each sub-section and directed the plot to the critical moments and, in some cases, to a resolution. The stories were then written in a coherent manner.

- As far as structure is concerned, I found narrative syntax as that proposed by Labov (n.d), with the following features: abstract, orientation, complicating action and coda, too restrictive to reflect the essence of life as lived. In my view, human life is more like a sea which is at times rough and at times calm and which experiences low and hide tides, rather than a sea with a single wave. Life comprises a series of complications at different points in time ─ some of these not necessarily having solutions. Moreover, I deemed that my narratives were unlikely to have a neat ending as I had caught the participants at one point in time and their development would continue even after our encounter. In that, I privileged open-endings as a more apt representation of reality.

I thus structured my narratives in the following manner: each narrative was attributed an epigram that encapsulated the very essence of the protagonists' experiences. This served to convey the gist of the story. Most of the narratives started in the participant's classroom, as a

means of foregrounding their context and teaching approach. Starting at the end (or rather at the current point since identity construction is on-going) and using the flashback technique, I worked retrospectively (Polkinghorne, 1995; Zeller, 1995) and showed how each participant had reached that point. I was here guided by my awareness of an audience. As a writer, I wanted to capture the interest of my reader ─ the importance of whom is brought out in Reissman, (2002). On the other hand, the chosen structure also reflected the journey as experienced by each participant and my understanding of her development path. For instance, Sandy's narrative is divided into four phases presented under the sub-headings borrowed from cinematography: Take 1, Take 2, Take 3, and Take 4. Each of these phases coincides with one period of her life but also brings in a different perspective or image of Sandy: In Take 1, Sandy appears confident and happy; in Take 2, Sandy admits to being a bit of everyone she has encountered; in Take 3, Sandy develops a new relationship with the English language; and in Take 4, Sandy appears uncertain, unconfident and full of dismay. Her story is open-ended because she does not appear to have charted the rest of her journey. Like me, the reader is plunged into uncertainty regarding the future possibilities of Sandy in the teaching profession.

- With respect to stylistic features, my preoccupation with VOICE led me to vary my decision regarding narrative voices. In the case of Sandy, Jyotee and Preety, I used both first and third person narrators. The third person narrator represented me, as I geared the plot, reflecting and commenting on diverse elements. Rather than gloss over my presence and produce "author-evacuated" (Sparkes & Smith, 2012, p. 53) texts, I chose to foreground my role as researcher and creator of the narratives. This approach is very much in keeping with life history research which "emphasizes the importance of researchers in the process of gathering, interpreting and reporting biographical information" (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 125). The first person narrator was the participant. Sandy and Jyotee were fluent in English and highly reflective on various aspects of their experiences. Thus their voices were given prominence in their stories and I quoted them extensively (Creswell, 2008). Their switches to French as well as the use of Hindi words in Jyotee's utterances were retained to capture the particular flavour of their speech and aptly represent their personality as multi-lingual individuals. These appear in italics in the narratives. Preety was mostly factual and expressed herself in simple English often marked by grammatical mistakes. In her story, therefore, there was much less use of direct speech and, when used, the language was kept simple.

Representing the voices/VOICES of Chantal and Mala was as challenging as when I had

been transcribing their interviews. I had to confront similar issues. While it had been easier to represent Preety's language use by keeping it simple, it was not possible to do so for the last two participants. I tried two versions for Mala (see Appendix xix for extracts from final and draft versions of her narrative) and, on comparing both, I decided to stick to a sophisticated use of English. I knew that VOICE would thereby be downplayed but I had to make sure that the essence of her experiences was aptly represented. As in the case of Sandy and Jyotee, I retained utterances in Creole and French as part of my endeavour to remain authentic. These, as well as the names of the pre-primary schools that appeared in French and Creole were italisised. The same strategy was adopted for Chantal. Further, in the case of all the participants, the terms or issues they stressed on were highlighted by being put in bold.

- The narratives are not a bare representation of events. All the stylistic considerations discussed so far reveal that the narratives also contain "textual devices that are used to indicate time, place, attributes of the characters, attributes of the context, and so on. These indicators do not advance the plot, but they provide information that may be essential to the interpretation of the events" (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 224). Textual devices were thus used to add layers of meaning to my narratives in order to make them more rounded and effective representations of the participants' experiences.

The writing of the narratives is far from being a smooth process; rather, it is a recursive process (Polkinghorne, 1995; Clandinin & Huber, in press) that entails going to and fro between transcripts, other data, the participants and the stories themselves. Once finalised, the narratives were validated by the participants. Most of them were agreeable to the way in which they had been represented. Sandy and Mala displayed reservations about some information that had been included. After discussing these with them, some parts were reworded or amended till we obtained a version we were mutually agreeable about.

3.3.1.3 Critical discussions with colleagues

While critical discussions with my colleagues in the English department had not been planned while conceiving the design of the study, I could not refrain from sharing my initial findings with them. This took place as the data had surprised me in many ways and also because the emerging findings (such as language use in the classroom, language dispositions, teaching strategies and the role of the home language in the classroom) were in line with what had been preoccupying us, as teacher educators, for a

while. A number of enriching critical discussions ensued as well as a drive to share our readings on the topics. The collaborative reflection fostered my thinking on the data and helped bring about conceptual clarity with respect to the phenomenon.

3.3.2 Level 2: Cross-case comparisons

When all the narratives had been written, I moved on to the following level of analysis, namely the analysis of the narratives. A thematic analysis was carried out through cross-case comparisons. The life history researcher refrains from going with assumptions or preconceived ideas and I went to the data with an open mind, adopting a grounded approach to identify themes that emerged from the stories. This inductive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) did not however preclude my being guided by a priori categories brought out in the conceptual framework. Such an approach to data analysis is supported by McAdams (2012) who terms it "discovery research" (p. 17). He posits:

> "The researcher begins with the data and moves toward abstractions as themes. At the same time, researchers typically hold out some theoretical predilections that implicitly, if not explicitly, help to guide the search for themes. Even in the context of discovery, researchers do not start out as blank slates. Nonetheless, the scientific goal in the context of discovery is to gain new (albeit provisional) insights − not to confirm predetermined categories." (McAdams, (2012, pp. 18-19).

In line with my critical questions, I identified ten factors that had influenced the participants' language experiences and their development as teachers, namely: parents, social background, pedagogical approach during schooling, use of English during schooling, teachers encountered during schooling, teacher education programmes, mentors, workplace, learners, and foreign influences. I classified the information systematically in a grid, inserting a column to the left where initial conclusions pertaining to each theme were encapsulated (see details in grid for cross-case analysis in Appendix xix). Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the use of visual displays assists in sharpening the analytical focus and drawing of conclusions and the use of the grid indeed facilitated the reduction of the data. This refinement enabled me to reorganise the themes by subsuming sub-themes under broader ones.

As I engaged in an in-depth analysis of these themes in the storied lives of the participants, I could identify the specific conditions under which certain factors impacted on individuals. This exercise allowed me to earmark resonances and dissonances across the five narratives and shed light upon the phenomenon I was studying.

3.3.3 Level 3: Analysis of antithetical cases

Traditionally, research studies involve carrying out analysis by taking things apart and synthesis by bringing the parts together (Stake, 2010). This two step process may however turn out to be quite restrictive and simplistic and thereby lead to drawing too hasty conclusions. As Van de Ven (2007, p. 16) argues:

> "In a complex world, diverent perspectives make diverent sorts of information accessible. By exploiting multiple perspectives, the robust features of reality become salient and can be distinguished from those features that are merely a function of one particular viewpoint or conceptual model."

Bearing in mind this stance and, in order to ascertain a deep understanding of the textured reality of the participants' experiences, my study included a third level of analysis. This focused on a study of antithetical cases — those Miles and Huberman (1994) call the "outliers" (ibid., p. 268) or the exceptions who "can test and strengthen the basic finding" (ibid.). By juxtaposing findings from the cross-case comparisons to the data generated from three participants, I attempted to counter the risk of concluding prematurely with broad generalisations. The three outliers were identified on the basis of dissonances noted during the cross-case comparisons in level 2 analysis. The use of the grid wherein the data had been displayed facilitated the task. An in-depth case analysis for each outlier was carried out in relation to the findings from level 2 analysis. This level of analysis was a significant validation check of conclusions that had been drawn. My analytical framework is represented in the diagram below.
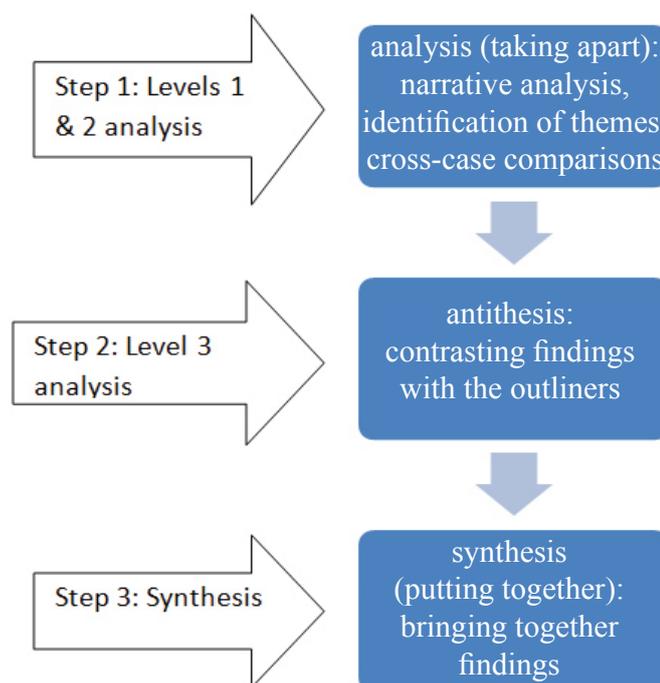
Figure 5: Framework for analytical validity

The different levels of data analysis undertaken led to further degrees of abstraction and the formulation of a thesis wherein the emergent concept of teacher professional development in the light of their biographical experiences was depicted.

Chapter summary

This chapter elaborated on the research design. It established and justified the choice of life history as research approach. It detailed the procedure for data generation and analysis, taking into account key considerations therein: the elaboration and implementation of tools for data production; research protocols observed and ethical considerations; issues encountered during data collection − especially regarding language and representation − and my moves to resolve these. The chapter also explained the choice of my six participants and painted their profile. As the chapter unfolded, I drew particular attention to the manner in which my tentative steps as an investigator gradually converted into more confident strides as I came to grips with the methodology at both the data generation and analysis stages. Finally, the chapter provided information on the strategies I adopted for data analysis, describing how the data was refined through three sequential levels of analysis, namely narrative analysis, the cross-case thematic comparisons and case studies of antithetical cases. It was pointed out that the procedure not only paved the way to further levels of abstraction and eventual theorisation but also catered for analytical validity.

The next chapter, chapter 4, marks the shift into the data analysis phase. It is the first of the two chapters that launches into a deep exploration of the phenomenon and scrutinises the data generated.

Chapter 4: Narrative analysis: the becoming
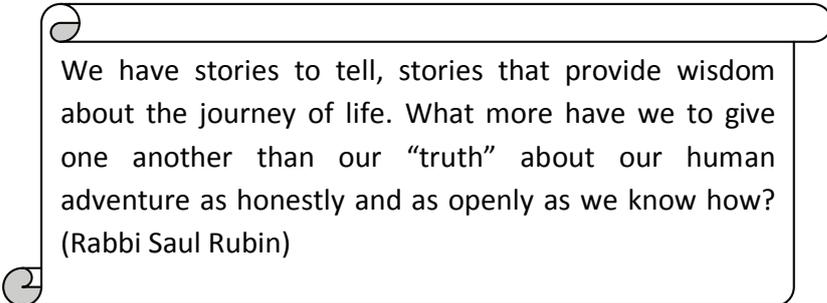
> We have stories to tell, stories that provide wisdom about the journey of life. What more have we to give one another than our "truth" about our human adventure as honestly and as openly as we know how? (Rabbi Saul Rubin)

Introduction

This chapter presents the participants' stories which lie at the heart of my study. It invites us to set sail and join the participants on a voyage wherein each reflects on her journey towards teacher development. Each story portrays the experiences of the teller and highlights the salient features of her passage to the classroom. Taking us across calm lagoons and tempestuous seas, the stories serve to uncover the predominant influences in the making of these teachers and their pedagogical approaches.

Orientation to this chapter

Section 1 of the chapter constitutes the tales of the tellers, that is the narratives of five of my participants: Sandy, Preety, Jyotee, Mala and Chantal. While each story is valuable in its own right and can be studied on its own, the narratives have been set in a specific order so as to depict the participants' growth in maturity and confidence in becoming teachers. Sandy, the youngest, most inexperienced and uncertain teacher, has therefore been placed at the outset and is juxtaposed with Chantal, the most experienced and poised, at the other end. In between are placed Preety, Jyotee and Mala who display varying degrees of know-how and confidence in their distinct teaching approach.

Section 2 draws from the five narratives to identify the most significant influences on the teachers' growth and examines these in relation to the existing knowledge base as brought out in the review of the literature.

The chapter ends by highlighting the findings from this first level of analysis.

Section 1: Storied lives

To be or not to be, that is the question...
(Hamlet, III,i)
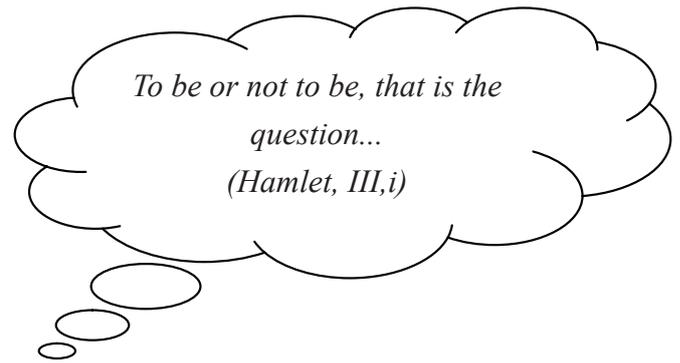
1.1 Sandy

Take 1: Loving my job

Sandy's classroom

Young, cheerful and bubbly Sandy is currently in her fourth year of teaching at Summerside, a coveted private English medium school. After the pre-requisite two-year period during which she was attached to a mentor, she is now in charge of her own class assisted by her colleague, Francoise. Together, they manage the pre-reception class comprising the 3-4 years age group. The well-equipped and spacious classroom is divided into various corners. At the back corner of her classroom is the reading corner; the other corners are dedicated to construction, the computer, dressing-up and writing, each indicated by a mobile that lists the learning objectives. The walls are covered with visual materials, constituting among others, children's work and charts. Unsurprisingly, most of the print is in English but one can notice a couple of children's statements in Creole that are reproduced verbatim on their respective worksheets. These are accompanied by the English translation inserted by the teachers.

What is a good teacher?

"What is a good teacher?" Sandy queries thoughtfully before pursuing: "I believe it depends on the background you come from, the way you were educated, your own philosophy...There's so much that goes into shaping a teacher." Pointing to the photographs in her album, she explains, "If I were to reflect on my own experiences, I would say that these people represent strategic influences in my growth: my parents, my teachers and my university lecturers. They have prompted me to explore different facets of teaching and adopt a pedagogical stance. Take what you think is the best from different people you meet and apply it." Sandy pauses, pondering on her last words. She realises that equations are not always straightforward. "To be honest, I haven't drawn my conclusions yet. I'm still investigating, comparing the old and new ways which to me represent different schools of thought: concept-driven versus

democratic learning. It's not about being right or wrong," she explains, "but about choosing what **best** suits the child in a particular context. I think *on doit se questionner, on doit évoluer[17]*. You can't just remain stuck with an approach that apparently works. *Non, non, non.[18]* I can't," Sandy shakes her head energetically and pursues emphatically, "I **need** changes; I **need** to reinvent myself and vary my teaching approach. I'm the kind of person who has got to be on the move, on the go, every time..."

Making learners confident being, belonging and becoming

Pulling out a sheet from her portfolio, Sandy shows me an illustration that metaphorically represents her teaching philosophy. She explains, "I love teaching children; they are beautiful to work with. I want my learners, above all, to be confident **belonging, being and becoming;** they should be capable of taking ownership of their learning journey − that's crucial for me. I cannot impose my beliefs on them. "

As a teacher I firmly believe in teaching citizen of the world, and help them celebrate who they are

"Do not confine your children to your own learning for they were born in another time." - Hebrew Proverb
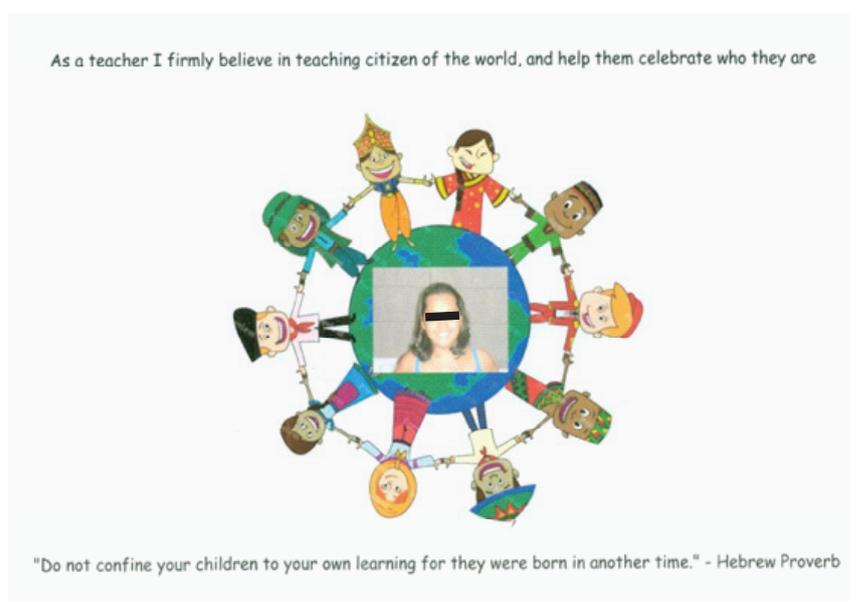
Figure 6: Metaphorical representation of Sandy's teaching philosophy

I'm curious to know how Sandy's philosophy translates into practice. Sandy enlightens me. "In line with the school's 'make it happen' philosophy, I teach through the inquiry approach. We teach concepts, skills, attitudes, knowledge and actions through meaningful play-based approaches and, for this age group, hands-on activities. The children are engaged in experiential learning and they learn through discovery. During brainstorming sessions, I elicit prior knowledge by questioning and prompting them. Though I accept all answers, I lead my learners to reflect critically on these and we may check in

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[17] We must question ourselves. We must evolve.
[18] No, no, no.

books or on 'You Tube' to find out how far these are correct. But it goes beyond being right or wrong. Everyone has a say. To me, inquiry's playing because you are playing: you question, you explore and you think; the same thing applies to inquiry. I believe in structuring the play. My teaching approach can best be summed up as being friendly **but** within boundaries. While being friendly allows me to lay the foundation of trust, setting boundaries arouses the pupils' awareness of the do's and don'ts in an educational setting and that, I believe, applies to any environment."

The challenge of conciliating languages

Reflecting on teaching English in a multi-lingual context, Sandy admits being in a quandary, "I find it very challenging being the conciliator between the children's mother tongue and having to abide by the school's English language policy. Since this is an English medium school, the teachers are expected to start off with this language but I don't know how far the child is exposed to it at home. So, despite being aware of instructions from the 'hierarchy' that is: "Use English at all times", I do code-switch. I often − but not always − go back to French and paraphrase some of the words and mime. Francoise and I do try to communicate in English with each other to provide the pupils with exposure but it feels so awkward because we are not used to it. Often, we just stare at each other and burst out laughing," Sandy admits with a wide grin.

"I must however acknowledge that with this age group we do have some freedom to use the children's mother tongue as compared to teachers working with the upper levels. That's why I have reproduced their descriptions verbatim on their worksheets but included the English version to make them learn the language. I'm proud of our multi-lingual heritage and the way we are able to juggle with different languages but my use of Creole is really minimal in the classroom. I will not speak Creole if I have the choice." Reflecting on her discriminatory stance towards Creole, Sandy tries to make sense of her attitude: "Having witnessed the way in which Creole was constantly belittled at home and at school, I guess I have been conditioned to view it as an inferior language". Here, I cannot help but echo Sandy's dilemma, "How can I promote open-mindedness with this attitude?"

The success of graded instruction

Shifting her focus back to teaching English, Sandy points out that, since her pupils join with limited knowledge of the language, she grades her instruction. "During the first school term I give the children key words, like 'thank you', 'good morning', and 'please', just to build up their vocabulary and give

some consistency to their speech. During the second term, I try to make short sentences. My instructions are generally given in English. I'm simply amazed to see how most of my students understand everything − that too in a class with only two children whose mother tongue is English! It's not that I'm trying to be *celle qui fait tout bien,*[19] **but I'm genuinely amazed** to see how they're picking up so much of the language!" Sandy exclaims unable to hide her surprise.

Catering for individual needs

"According to me, teaching a language goes beyond broadening the child's vocabulary. It also involves considering how far the child understands, applies and interprets what is being taught. Formative assessment enables me to identify individual needs and cater for these through differentiated instruction. One of my pupils, Ashi, comes from a rural area, St Julien d'Hotman, with Creole as her mother tongue. To her, therefore, I give simple straightforward instructions. On the other hand, I noticed that Christian, the French student, could pick up two instructions in English like this (Sandy snaps her fingers) and that too within as short a span as two weeks, though he came to school speaking French only. It could be a sign of maturity or due to parental support. I can't generalise but this approach really works out for me." Sandy smiles with self -satisfaction.

School policy meets personal philosophy

Highlighting the importance of a supportive environment, Sandy says, "To a great extent, I can be the teacher I am because Summerside gives me the freedom to adopt the principles I believe in. Show me a school − aside from this one − where the teacher can come to the same level as the kids! In Government schools, reforms don't really change anything. At the end you still have to bear the stress of the all-important end of cycle assessment[20]. And what if you're not good academically? What will happen? **Here,** at Summerside," Sandy states pointedly, "we believe in multiple intelligences. You can cater for the child if you know the child's strength is not on the academic side; you can always guide him somewhere else. I wish I could go back in time and explain all of this to my parents. I wish they had chosen this type of school for me. I have no doubt that I would have developed my skills and self-confidence earlier on rather than in the later years."

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[19] The expert.
[20] Reference is made to the national examination at the end of the primary cycle, the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE).

Take 2: Taking a bit from everyone
Shaping forces at home

Laissez- faire but within boundaries

As she reminiscences about shaping influences from home, Sandy asserts, "My personality as a teacher is strongly influenced by my upbringing. I grew up within a *laissez-faire* [21] approach. My siblings and I were allowed much more freedom than other kids. We must have been the odd ones out but I think this was my parents' reaction to their own very conservative upbringing. However, we did not turn out bad. Mum did explain something about logical consequences and natural consequences... I still hear it now that I am 25 and it's only now that it is making sense. Such experiences aroused my interest in children's rearing quite early on," Sandy reveals contemplatively.

"My parents were complementary in their attitude. Mummy was the friendly one while Dad was strict, but he worked alongside her. Mum was more involved in my learning journey. She was the one who would buy me books and set up meetings with my teachers if she felt I was not bonding well with them. Dad was not as much involved but he had high expectations. He is a well-known lawyer and expected us to obtain high scores for our exams."

Languages at home

"My family has a more-or-less French background. My maternal grandmother was a Franco-Mauritian while my grandfather was Creole. Grandmother had in fact defied the social laws of the time by eloping with the servant's son," Sandy adds to explain the disparity. "All the prestige is on my Dad's side. He has a good balance of both English and French influences. Both his parents had been teachers and his dad eventually became the Rector of the most prestigious boys' school on the island. They used to speak English at home but he pursued his studies in France. My Dad switches languages once in a while when he's in the mood. My Mum, on the other hand, is not so fluent in English. Her attempts to express herself in English are quite catastrophic, very much like my elder sister, Anabelle's." Sandy bursts out laughing: "Mum says things like: 'But *ur mets zis là-bas* [22]' and 'Expensive Care Unit' instead of 'Intensive Care Unit' and yet," Sandy comments incredulously, "she refuses to be corrected by me saying that I am not her teacher! Anabelle is currently experimenting a 'one French-speaking day and one English-speaking

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[21] Freedom to do as one wishes.
[22] But put this over there.

day' at home with her children, just like Mum had done when we were young. She tells her son things like: 'Lucas, euhhh go and ur go and *laver* your *mains*.[23] ' Sandy laughs loudly, thoroughly amused by the situation she is depicting. "My sister and her family are so used to speaking French that they tend to think in French. So whenever it's the English day, I go over and help the young ones learn the vocabulary."

I grew up reading

Sandy attributes her own fluency in English largely to her Mum's and Dad's insistence that their children read extensively. "This has been very beneficial to my language learning. The unspoken contract between us was having to read extensively in order to develop our vocabulary and speak fluently, read and write in both English and French, in exchange of the freedom we enjoyed. So I grew up reading and I just **love** books!" Sandy exclaims rolling her eyes. "I read from Paolo Coelho and Ngugi to Mark Levi and the list goes on and on and on..."

Shaping forces from my schooling days

My first taste of English at preschool

As Sandy turns her mind to the place of English in her schooling, she points out that the pre-school she had attended was the first English medium one that had just opened in her neighbourhood. "It was named Tumble Down. I vividly recall that my teachers, Annie and Claudine, communicated only in English. We were only allowed to address the maids in French. I'm not quite sure why my parents chose that school, apart from the fact that it was close to home." Sandy thinks aloud, trying to make the connection. "It could be because Mum wanted her children to be more proficient in English than she herself was. I also recall that, at that time, my parents were thinking of migrating. This may have triggered the desire to make their children proficient in English. Moreover, all my Mum's relatives had migrated to Australia during the exodus period and spoke English. She may have thought that the language would help us maintain the relationship."

"I had the most amazing experience at Tumble Down. It was really a different setting with big phones, cushions of different shapes that we could bounce on, egg hunts and the end of year play. I have very good memories of that period and tend to make connections with Summerside. Both schools espouse

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[23] Lucas go and wash your hands.

the same philosophy and offer enriching experiences for the holistic development of learners.”

Learning not to become

At primary school, Sandy encounters Rachel who leaves a lifelong imprint on her. “My standard III Franco-Mauritian teacher, Rachel, struck me as being an unhappy person. She always walked around with a grumpy face. She was just mean and *rastenik* [24]!” Sandy exclaims vehemently. “I was a chatterbox and this got us started on the wrong foot. She would constantly summon me: ‘Valère, come here! Valère, do that!’ I simply **hate** being called by my family name. My name is Sandy, not Valère! Being called by my family name denied me of my own identity,” she hammers in. “I recall an incident when Rachel called me to the blackboard to work out a math sum. **I was terrified**. I was never a confident person but around that time, I really started losing my confidence. I used to love going to school but I began to dislike school.” Sandy points out sombrely. “It’s amazing to see just how much impact one person can have on your life! Since then, I can’t meet Franco-Mauritians without being biased.”

Expounding further on Rachel’s approach to teaching, Sandy states, “Her traditional approach is something that I can never imbibe! Maths is all about logic. Why couldn’t Rachel have made her lessons more fun?” she wonders. “Teaching is not just about putting in a load of work− endless sums on the board− it’s about interacting! Because of such experiences, I decry the strong academic focus that primary school had. Why must the teacher be placed on a pedestal? Why did we have to be threatened with punishments or tempted with rewards? The stick and the star!” Sandy exclaims, incredulous.

“Paradoxically, from this negative encounter with Rachel, I started blooming. I kept her in my sub-conscience as the type of teacher not to become. I really wish I could meet her one day. I’d tell her: ‘You know what? You brought a change in my life. See where I am today! I’m the caring and democratic teacher you could never be!’ I’m definitely closer to my students than she ever was. She always drew this barrier between her and the students whereas I know I’m the teacher but sometimes I want to be the student; I want my students to be the teacher and teach me things.”

Teachers who nurtured a love for school

But Sandy also encounters teachers who project an attitude that is opposite to that of Rachel. “There

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[24] Psychologically/mentally disturbed; extremely nervous.

were teachers like Mariel, Helen and Rosalind who nurtured a love for school and who brought out the importance of learning. I worked really hard to score high grades and please Mariel, my Environmental Studies teacher, though I hated the subject itself. She had a more friendly approach and was always

smiling. And then there was Rosalind who was British. She taught us phonics though games. She was a great person, a really loving teacher. Once we read 'The Little Red Hen' together and she acted it out. This was something we had never done before in **all** my years of schooling. I was enthralled!" Sandy exclaims. "I went home and acted it before my younger brothers." Sandy spontaneously starts to recite lines from the story, oblivious of my presence. She appears to have drifted back to those days and relives the pleasure that moment had afforded her. "'Would you help me to bake my bread?' 'No, not I. Oh no, not I.' 'Then, I will do it all by myself!' Through the role play I remembered it all," Sandy beams.

"Helen was just fantastic. I later learnt that she knew my family but I do not think that she was nicer to me than to the others because of that. I just believe she was just fair in her approach but, at the same time, I appreciated the particular attention she gave me and which I didn't have at home because Mum couldn't cater for five kids. As the third born in a family of five children, I was never too sure where I stood and this is what perhaps triggered my identity crisis."

"At secondary school, my French literature teacher, Beatrice, made a strong impression on me because her teaching was drastically different from all my other teachers. She would take everybody outside and allow us to read our favourite chapter. It was not as boring as the other classes. Wow! I was so impressed by this teaching strategy. It led me to question the way in which teachers tend to confine their students in a structured space and act as the dispenser of knowledge; the unquestionable figure of authority. Beatrice, on her part, was more democratic and let her students share their views."

Take 3: Awakening of my love for English

I could speak another language

"At school we were taught English mostly through drills and by working out 'fill-in-the-blanks' exercises. We did not really understand that English was not merely a subject but another language, another means of communication. At that time, there wasn't this awareness of other cultures. Though it was also the medium of instruction, all subjects were in fact taught in French. It was only during the English lesson that we would speak English. My first trip to Australia, when I was eight years old,

became an eye opener. I was suddenly thrown into an environment where everybody was speaking English so fast. I was not used to people around me speaking English constantly. I can still recall how hard the first two weeks were. I kept switching to French, even with my cousins who didn't have any knowledge of French! Their own parents spoke Creole with them as a nationalistic move but I refused to speak Creole because I had been conditioned to view it as inferior," Sandy points out before mimicking the school refrain: *'Les filles de Ste Helène ne parlent pas le Créole.'* [25]" She bursts out laughing. "I would listen to my aunt conversing with shop assistants and be perplexed by what she said. It took me two weeks to open up to the language and then I practised as much as I could. On my return, I showed off a bit at school because I had been overseas and had been practising my English," Sandy admits with a mischievous grin. "I was aware that I could speak another language because I had been to the country where you 'apply' it whereas, here, where are you going to speak English apart from in one or two English classes that you have at school?"

The trip stands out as a landmark in Sandy's learning of English as she develops a special bond with the language. "Though I had always been more inclined towards French, from then, I became the best student in my English class. I was really motivated to speak English fluently because Mum would say, 'Oh I might send you back to Australia, who knows?' I had always been an average student but, for once in my entire lifetime, I worked extremely hard to obtain high scores − not to impress the teacher, like I used to− but because I had started loving the language."

Sandy then indicates that secondary school afforded her with more exposure to English, through subjects like Mathematics and General Paper, but more especially Literature. "Through Literature and the study of great philosophers like Shakespeare and Alexander Pope I became aware that you can become cultivated and acquire beautiful vocabulary. My love of letters makes me admire the way language is used; be it simple English or good French. I simply remain quiet and listen to the accent, to the choice of words and the way sentences are structured. I think: What can I pick up from these? How can I apply this now? I believe that one is a life-long learner; I may be a teacher but I'm a life-long learner *avant tout* [26] !"

Australia the pivotal point − again

Sandy avers that Australia became a pivotal point again when, years later, she joined university. She

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[25] (French utterance) "Girls attending St Gabriel School do not speak Creole."
[26] (French utterance) Before anything else.

was then exposed to an alternative way of teaching. "My three university lecturers, Linda, Shanon and Daisy have contributed a lot to my growth as a teacher. They all came from different backgrounds and presented a blend of approaches. Linda was from Lebanon where you find *beaucoup de sévérité, très austère* [27], Shanon was the typical upfront Australian bloke who would tell you things to your face, and Daisy was the balance of these two. It was just fascinating to observe them bounce off ideas and teaching strategies thereby prompting us to build up our teaching repertoire. All three shared their passion with us and urged us to be who we are. Their motto was: 'I have to be who I am. I can't be anybody else.' I felt I knew who I was; I wasn't so much on that identity quest anymore. Well, I still am now but let's say to a lesser extent."

"Once, when I was visiting a school in Australia, I saw the teacher lying on the floor playing the sick person and the children scurrying around like doctors." Sandy giggles. "I was so happy because I realised I was on the right track. This is when my evolution started. I realised that *le ridicule ne tue pas*[28]. I could make a difference through my teaching, through my lively and enthusiastic way of dealing with things. I was determined to become a **better** version of Rachel. To be honest I also realised that you still have to structure lessons and that she had been constrained with a class of thirty pupils but, to me, it is equally important to take the children into consideration."

"I emerged from my Australian stint a different person. Before I was viewed as a cuckoo- head but my Australian experience had forged my character. Since I had to fend for myself financially, I felt I could face any situation without being scared, you know, like Mulan [29]."

Take 4: My on-going quest

At times I feel I am a misfit

And yet, when Sandy talks about her colleagues, the uncertainty that creeps into her voice belies her previous statement. "My relationship with my colleagues here, at school, is ambiguous. There is no doubt that they have helped me evolve. My mentor taught me to be firm with children. Earlier I would be scared to death to reprimand a child least I would be another Rachel in his life. Even now I run to her for advice. When I'm struggling with something, I also consult my colleague, Rosa, next door, who has

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[27] (French utterance) Much severity, very austere.
[28] There is nothing wrong in acting the fool. Sandy is here using a French proverb in an unfamiliar context, as it is normally used to formulate derogatory remarks about clumsy people.
[29] Chinese character in animated film who depicts heroism in a patriarchal society.

eleven or thirteen years of experience at Summerside. It's all about sharing and cooperation as in any work place." At this point, Sandy pauses contemplatively for a while. My inkling that she is undergoing an emotional conflict within is confirmed by the words that follow slowly: "And yet, at times, I feel as though I'm a misfit. My colleagues tend to snub me because of my French penchant, while they interact in Creole. Ironically, when it comes to writing a letter or addressing the Headmaster, they'll push me to the forefront because of my fluency!"

Who am I?

"Who am I?" Sandy wonders aloud, staring into the distance. She appears to be oblivious of my presence. She starts silently again. "It is difficult for me to find a word to describe myself as I'm a bit of everyone. I guess this reveals my lack of confidence. When I was at school, I was considered as a push-over but part of me is still fragile ... innocent." Pulling herself together, Sandy pursues, "At times, I'm sure of myself. When I see my children happy, I'm confident of my approach." The lesson I had observed earlier flashes before me. I had witnessed how she had brushed aside her planning and come up with an alternative lesson by picking up her cues from the children. Pointing to the door separating her classroom from her colleague's, Sandy says, "As long as this door is closed and it's me and my learners, I'm fine. I'm convinced that children can sort themselves out. They do not have to be cocooned." I recall her reminiscences about her parents' *laissez-faire* attitude and wonder if this is the source of her clash with her colleagues. Sandy seems to read my mind as she says, "They are not ready to be so open and free with the children." She falters, "There are times when I plunge into uncertainty. Though I know for a fact that I am here for the children, I feel that my trial and error approach is like using my kids as guinea pigs: Too bad it didn't work this time; we'll see with the next batch... Am I on the right track?" Sandy wonders. She sighs despondently stating, "I suppose I'm caught in an existential dilemma, trying to figure out who I am and constantly shifting between certainty and doubt. It's not only because of my colleagues. I'm generally considered as being... a specimen, even at home: Cuckoo-head, Goofy[30], Loony Toon [31]..." She laughs again to disguise the hurt. Then, as she turns to me, I get a glimpse of keenness in her eyes. "Actually, I envisaged quitting this job at the start of the year. I really feel it's time for a change and I'm still giving it a thought..."

The image of Alice[32] standing in the midst of doors, wondering which one to open, flashes before my eyes.

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[30] Disney cartoon character known for being clumsy
[31] Cartoon characters.
[32] Main protagonist from "Alice in Wonderland"

The only source of knowledge is experience.

(Albert Einstein)
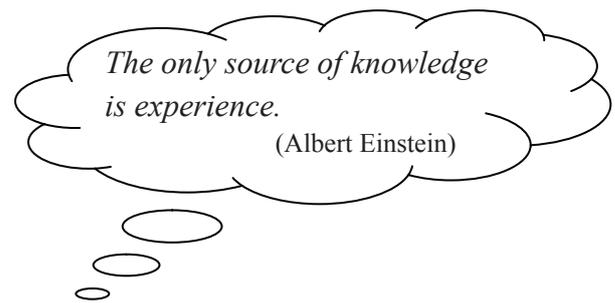
1.2 Preety

A peek into Preety's classroom

Preety sits on a small chair. *"Asseyez-vous là* [33]*,"* she instructs the children who then sit in a semi-circle on the mat before her. Preety holds a big book and prepares to read a story aloud. "The Little Red Hen", she reads the title assertively and questions the children about the cover illustration: "Observe. *Regardez* [34]. *Qu'est ce que vous voyez?*[35]" *"Poule*[36] ,"* reply the children. "A hen," says Preety. She reads the story expressively pointing to the illustration on each page. The children listen to her eagerly. At times, they echo her unsolicited. Preety reads the story again. This time, she translates it in French for the children to understand. The reading is interspersed with questioning to check their understanding. As Preety reads about the hen who decides to eat her bread alone, a little boy spontaneously says, *"Li dir 'miam miam'* [37]*!"*

At the end of the story, Preety prompts the children to respond to the theme of the story before inviting volunteers to narrate it. By now, the interaction is in French. After the storytelling session, the children wish to sing. Preety allows them to sing songs of their choice. They enthusiastically sing a Creole song, *"Enn ti kanar monte bisiklet"* [38] followed by a French song, *"Une souris verte"*[39]. "Can you sing an English song now?" asks Preety. The children comply singing 'Twinkle twinkle little star' and the singing session ends with yet another French song, *"Que fais-tu joli petit poisson rouge"*[40].

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[33] (French utterance) Sit down here.
[34] (French utterance) Look.
[35] (French utterance) What can you see?
[36] (French utterance) Hen.
[37] (Creole utterance) It says: "Yummy!"
[38] (Creole utterance) A little duck rides a bicycle.
[39] (French utterance) A green mouse.
[40] (French utterance) What are you doing beautiful little gold fish?

<center>**Shaping experiences**</center>

Preety has been a pre-primary teacher for fifteen years and has worked in a number of schools. She currently works at Ladybird pre-primary school. Jovial and confident, she manages her class with ease. As Preety reflects upon past experiences that have forged the teacher she has become, she foregrounds critical periods in her life.

' Ti-miss tilekol' [41]

Preety muses over her pre-primary school days at *Le Petit Poucet.* Like other pre-schools in those days, it was known as *'Ti-miss tilekol'*, an indication of its perceived lack of importance compared to primary and secondary schooling. Due to a dearth of official regulation and financial investment in this sector, schools were often set up in the teacher's house and did not even have basic resources like toys, books and tables. They were run by teachers who had not undergone training in Early Childhood Education and thus taught through drills. Preety recollects: "Miss Lolo, my teacher, was a retired headmistress. There were no toys, no books and not even tables at school. We played outside in the yard and there was a bed on which we could sleep if we were tired. I remember that we sat on a bench and Miss Lolo made us recite numbers and alphabets in English and write these on our slate, just as children are taught at primary school. She even taught standards I and II topics like multiplication and division!" Preety exclaims in amazement, highlighting the disparity between the level of the children and the concepts taught.

We can also learn from negative experiences

Primary school marks not only a shift in the pedagogical approach and language use but also encounters with different types of teachers who left a deep impression on Preety. "I really loved my lower primary teacher, Miss Simla who was pretty and dressed up well. She was friendly and I liked going to school then," Preety recollects with a wide smile. Her face clouds up slightly as she pursues, "But I didn't like Mr. Roy, Mr. Gopee and Mr. Sulliman, who taught me in upper primary because they beat us." School was transformed into a terrifying and alienating space where Preety could not even smile at her friend without being hit. Preety chuckles now, but admits that she used to feel dreadful. "Every week, I stayed at home at least one day. I was always in pain. I did not want to go to school then. I passed my standard VI exams with much difficulty."

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[41] (Creole term) Small teacher, small school.

Yet, from her current vantage point, Preety can view the whole episode dispassionately and acknowledges the influence of both the good and bad teachers in forging her identity as a teacher, "May be the bad teacher was better than the good one because he taught me something. When you have something positive, it is good but we can also learn from negative experiences." By being a victim of corporal punishment, Preety understood the need to be sensitive to her own learners who remember her for her kindness.

We spoke French and Creole at school

Preety's reminiscences lead her to an appraisal of the more limited use of English language in her primary days though she attended, Curepipe School, a school that was reputed for its good academic standard. Contrary to expectations, Creole was currently spoken. "At school, we spoke Creole. No one spoke French or English. Even the teacher communicated with us in Creole; during English classes she explained in French or Creole and then she wrote in English on the blackboard." Preety also points to the traditional approach of teaching whereby no attempt was made to broaden children's exposure to the English language, for instance through storytelling. She underscores the fact that only the textbooks were in English.

Secondary school marked yet another shift in Preety's language experiences. While the use of English as medium of instruction was more prevalent than in primary school, the language did not prove to be a barrier for subjects like Mathematics, Accounts and Social Studies. Diagrams and illustrations included in the textbooks facilitated understanding. Though Preety admits that, "Even in secondary school we spoke Creole, not French," she nevertheless found French easy because of its similarity with Creole[42].

I read English only when I had to

The spectrum of languages used was broader at home due to her leisure activities. Preety relates: "I usually listened to songs in Hindi, French or English. I used to sing in English when the song was nice. I loved to read French books from the 'Harlequin' and 'Mills and Boons' series." After this honest acknowledgement of her preference for French, Preety giggles and admits: "I read English books only when I **had** to. I studied 'Macbeth' but the language was too difficult. It was so different from the English we read that I could not understand anything!" Preety bemoans. The unfamiliar language compelled the

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[42] Note that Mauritian Creole has a French-based lexis.

teachers to translate extensively in French, thereby abating Preety's interest in the text. This teaching approach impregnated a notion of foreignness on the English language – a notion that was reinforced by her teachers' limited use of the language. She noted how they spoke French with ease during the French lesson but would simply switch to French if they had difficulties speaking English. "They taught us the terms in French," Preety points out earnestly. Consequently, exposure to English was limited and there was no impetus to understand or use it.

Life takes a new turn

Preety's life suddenly took a twist when she was sixteen years old. Until then, she had lived in Curepipe[43] in an extended but close knit family. She takes pride in her educated family members who can speak English. "My mother was very intelligent. She had studied till standard VI and had passed La Bourse[44]. She and my brother helped me with my studies. The family[45] in Curepipe was educated and could speak some English. I also had three uncles who lived in England. We spoke only Creole at home but when my uncles and cousins came to Mauritius, we spoke English."

During that year, when her father passed away, Preety and her brother were compelled to shift to Dagotière[46] to live with their maternal grandmother. This uprooting marks a social downfall and linguistic disruption in Preety's life.

"My brother and I **did not** want to go there," Preety emphasises, her face darkening with the weight of the turmoil she had then undergone. Their reluctance to move could be explained by the fact that Curepipe offered numerous attractions like shops, while Dagotière was merely a small village. Preety's voice resonates with dismay as she evokes Dagotière, "There was nothing there..."

As she settled in an NHDC[47] housing complex also occupied by residents coming from different towns, Preety gradually developed new linguistic habits shaped by her new surroundings, "We did not speak that much English there. We spoke French with the neighbours and Creole at home. Only my grandmother spoke Bhojpuri[48]."

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[43] A town in the central part of the island.
[44] A prestigious exam at that time. Those who passed it could obtain a scholarship and admission to the coveted secondary schools of the island.
[45] Here taken to mean close relatives.
[46] A small village in the central part of the island, about 7 kms from Curepipe.
[47] National Housing Development Corporation: housing complexes built by the government and sold at a comparatively lower price to people from the lower socio-economic rungs.
[48] Language that originates from Bihar in India. The variant commonly spoken in Mauritian includes Creole lexis.

I wanted to be a teacher

As Preety expounds upon her choice of career, she recollects opting for a teaching career due to financial constraints. She followed a course at L'OMEP[49] since professional qualifications were a pre-requisite for pre-primary school teachers. Gradually, the course aroused her interest in teaching, "After I had followed courses, I wanted to be a teacher. May be I had matured, I don't know...I had grown up and was more experienced," Preety conjectures reflectively.

…like a helper

Preety recalls her struggling days as she started her professional journey at the bottom of the ladder. The three qualified teachers, Meera, Renu and Julie, to whom she was attached, did not consider her trustworthy enough to be given teaching responsibilities. "They asked to me help them… like a helper." While such an attitude could be attributed to Preety's unqualified status and inexperience in the classroom, she also felt the snub of being a trainee from a private organisation, as opposed to the other trainee present. "There was another lady from the MIE. For me it was difficult because I was from l'OMEP. The MIE was more credible". These factors, in addition to the precarious state of pre-primary schools and hence the position of the staff in the days when pre-primary schooling was not compulsory, impelled Preety to remain silent. "I was supposed to be paid by the Parent Teacher Association but I worked with them for one year without salary. The three teachers had been there for a long time so I could not say anything."

I did not know anything

Preety's description of her first days at Dagotière School unambiguously conveys her initial bewilderment. "The first week, I had a headache. All this was very different to me. There was lots of noise; lots of noise and many children." Preety deemed that she lacked practical knowledge due to the emphasis on theoretical know-how at l'OMEP and also due to the nature of her own pre-school experiences. She felt ill-equipped to cope with the classroom reality: "I did not know anything, not even songs because I had not learnt songs or poems at pre-primary school." Yet, Preety was driven by her determination to learn. "Right from the first week," she points out, "I observed how every morning they said prayers and sang the national anthem. I learnt how the teachers planned their work and controlled the children without shouting at them."

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[49] *Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire* (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education): an international organisation that offers courses in Early Childhood Education.

The fateful visit of Mr. Ramtohul, a Teacher Supervisor [50] from the Pre-School Trust Fund[51] , propelled Preety to a new stage of her career. "The Supervisor wanted to see what I was doing but the teachers had not given me proper work. It was only then that one of the teachers, Meera, asked me to help her. **She** showed me how to teach and how to plan. I think that she was like a god and wanted to help me," she states gratefully describing how, under Meera's guidance, she developed her teaching skills. "I found it quite difficult at the beginning but Meera showed me what strategies to use, how to prepare resources like domino games and puzzles, and even how to invent songs. By then, I had realised that I loved children and liked teaching them." And yet, while Meera empowered Preety with the ability to devise a repertoire of teaching strategies, she did not present an alternative approach to language use; her predominant use of French and Creole with the pupils was what Preety had been exposed to so far.

I had the power to talk

The period during which Preety was posted at Little Tots in Arsenal[52] remains the most important and memorable one in her career. At first, Preety found the transfer nightmarish and overwhelming. "Everything was very different: the parents, the children, the environment itself. Most of the parents worked in hotels; some parents were unemployed. There were 'problem' and broken families and parents who were alcoholics or drug addicts. It was **very difficult** to work there!"

This time too, Preety owed her survival to a colleague who mentored her. "After the first year, I had a new colleague, Asha, and I learnt a lot from her." Asha, who had worked in the region for many years, knew how to deal with parents. Thanks to her, Preety developed the ability to tackle over-ambitious parents who expected teachers to rush their children into more advanced concepts. "I learnt how to communicate with parents. At the start, in 1997 and 1998, when parents talked to me, I was almost in tears. Now, I had the power to talk and I became more confident." Thanks to Asha who encouraged her to take up new ventures, Preety developed self-confidence. Referring to her participation in an educational programme produced by the Mauritius College of the Air [53], Preety says with a sense of achievement. "I was chosen out of three colleagues!"

Preety's know-how and confidence blossomed as she entertained a good working relationship with Asha. They collaborated closely, unlike the practice in most schools. "I did not work only with my lot of 25

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[50] Officer with the responsibility of inspecting teachers' work.
[51] Now known as the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA).
[52] A rural area in the north of the island.
[53] A body that dispensed courses through a distance mode and produced educational programmes for the different levels of schooling.
   It is now known as the Open University of Mauritius.

or 17 children; I worked with **all** the children in turn. I knew all their names. From 8 30 a.m to 2 p.m, I was constantly on my feet. I did not have time to sit. We always had something to do. Every day, from 2 to 2.30 p.m. we did our planning." Asha supplemented what Preety had acquired from Meera and enabled her to become more versatile in her teaching. "She showed me how to teach using resources like blocks and puzzles."

Our achievement

Together, Asha and Preety went beyond the confines of teaching and helped provide the children with an environment conducive to learning. Along with the zealous Parent Teacher Association president, who enlisted the support of ministers and obtained financial assistance from sponsors, both teachers transformed the place. "Within two years, lots of things changed in the school. We could give the children gifts and food they could not afford. Here is a newspaper article that talks about our achievement. This is the mural we did on the wall and the floor we tiled," Preety proudly shows me a newspaper cutting she has kept preciously for years. The pride and self-satisfaction resonating in her voice are difficult to miss as she adds that all the children she had worked with were later admitted to good secondary schools. The experience taught her to believe in herself.

I now speak English more frequently

While Preety concedes that, "The way I teach has changed over the years," she readily admits that, initially, her approach was traditional. Due to inexperience, she followed the dictates of the Teacher Supervisor: "In 1997, when I had just started, I made the children write and recite the alphabets and numbers − everything was written. We were using slates and blackboards. There was some use of oral language like singing, storytelling, teaching moral values − not that often, but sometimes. This was not done in English but in French and Creole. At that time, English represented less than 50% of language use in the classroom." It strikes me that her depiction of her classroom is strongly reminiscent of her own days as a pre-schooler.

The need to be understood by the children and her own training courses which had been conducted in French prompted Preety to cling mostly to Creole or French, the children's mother tongue. "I did what I had been taught," she explains. Preety shifted to the use of English in the classroom only after having followed the Certificate of Proficiency and Teacher's Certificate courses at the MIE. "These courses were not only conducted in English but we were also taught how to teach English and what types of

activities to carry out." The change of medium did require painstaking alterations in her strategies. "It was a bit difficult at the beginning because the children did not understand what I said but when I sang and did storytelling, they did understand a few words. Still I had to explain these in French." Her rising mastery of teaching gradually encouraged her to adopt English more frequently. "I now speak English more frequently in the classroom," she beams.

Now, I am much more confident

Preety ponders over other factors that have exerted a force on her approach. One of the principal influences was the National Curriculum Framework implemented in 2010 and which led her to embrace a child-centred pedagogy. The children's readiness and differentiated tasks are key to her teaching. Preety asserts confidently, "Now, with the NCF, the teaching approach is different. We do not teach alphabets and numbers. Children **have** to play; they learn **through play**. First we have to make sure that they know their name and can identify it. We teach writing through free drawing. For children who are four years old and above, I write the numbers and some words, like a boy, a girl. **Then** they look and copy these **if** they can," Preety stresses.

Over the years, Preety has attended a number of workshops, followed short courses and participated in a research project on Communicative Language Teaching that was carried out jointly by the MIE and an Australian university. This has helped her to develop professionally. "Now I am much more confident in planning activities and in my choice of teaching strategies. I can conduct an activity around anything I find worthwhile. Can you see the blocks there?" she asks pointing to a few blocks strewn on the floor, "I can use this as an opportunity to teach colours or size." With this seemingly casual and off-hand statement, Preety gives an indication of the long way she has travelled– from a raw trainee to a confident practitioner who has developed adequate flexibility to spontaneously adapt her teaching according to circumstances. While she had always been aware that English is a very important academic subject, the research project also made Preety realise that she had to speak the language more frequently in the classroom. The resources she had obtained, such as the weather chart, the calendar, big books, twister game and puppets – which were all prominently displayed in the classroom– had brought her to understand the importance of resources in facilitating language teaching. "With such resources, teaching children English is easier." Preety realised that these enable her to provide concrete experiences to her learners and adopt new teaching strategies.

Children determine language choices

If, over the years, the use of English has gained prominence in Preety's classroom, it can also be attributed to evolving social contexts that have impacted upon the language experiences of her learners. "Children are now more exposed through newspapers and the internet. Parents are educated and help their children at home," Preety posits. Similarly, she supports her daughter who displays more ease with regard to English. To facilitate comprehension, she resorts to a range of teaching strategies such as demonstration, gestures, concrete objects, songs, and stories. She also relates concepts to the children's own experiences. Preety has understood that "Children imitate us and repeat what we say. They have no difficulties remembering." She thus ensures that they are exposed to routine language, "I sing 'Good morning Mr. Sun' very often so the children recall and understand the words."

Recognising that French and Creole remain languages that are still widely used, Preety states self-assuredly that the languages she uses depend on the children. "The children help me decide. Some parents speak to their children in Creole or French, in some cases Bhojpuri [53]." Her current learners find French easier than English, their knowledge of English being at word level.

Juggling with various languages

While she wishes to promote the use of English in her classroom, Preety is faced with her own lack of proficiency. She admits that she also speaks French more often because she is confident in that language. "I know what I am saying! I don't know whether my English is good because I am not so fluent." Preety glances around her print-rich classroom reflectively, "I did not realise that all the print is in English…" Since this does not reflect language use in her classroom, she deems that it is due to the official status of English as reflected in the NCF. She admits, "I speak Creole or French with my colleagues, the Head Teacher and the parents. I speak French mostly when I explain and talk to the children. I also use Creole in informal situations or when children do not understand." Preety seems confident that she understands the different languages that are in operation in her classroom. They each have a different status and value and can thus be used for different purposes and for different learners or learning activities.

Happy to be where I am

As Preety rounds up her recollections, her tone evokes a sense of self-satisfaction. Displaying testimonials from Headmasters and Teacher Education Supervisors and letters of appreciation from parents, she says, "I am happy to be where I am today." Having applied for the Teacher's Diploma in Early Childhood Education course, Preety is eager to follow the course and strives on towards further progress.
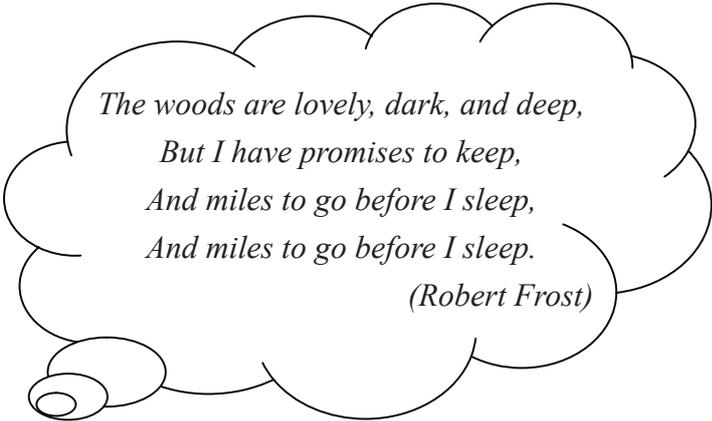
The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
(Robert Frost)

1.3 Jyotee

A glimpse of Jyotee's classroom

Jyotee has been a pre-primary teacher for the past twenty years. She currently works at *Jardin d'Enfants*[54], a private French medium school. Jyotee reveals that she is the only English teacher in the school. As we sit in her classroom, I glance around, noting how neatly everything is arranged. Though the room is small, it is replete with visual materials such as posters, word cards and children's worksheets−all in English. The reading corner displays a number of English books neatly arranged on shelves. The number of pupils in Jyotee's class varies according to the demand; this year she is working with eight children but there are times when she has above twenty. As Jyotee goes down memory lane, recollecting experiences of language use and learning, her accounts bring out the intricate link of these experiences with different people and sites.

Home as a multi-lingual space

Evoking the linguistic environment in which she has evolved, Jyotee's points out that, "Home has always been a place where several languages were used. I lived in an extended family when I was a kid. My grandma and my aunts spoke Bhojpuri. So, I learnt Bhojpuri during my childhood and I'm very fluent in it. If people had spoken as much French or English with me, I would have been very fluent in these languages. I suppose that at a young age, one learns a language much more easily. Even now, I speak Bhojpuri with older family members. Otherwise, I spoke Creole with my parents and siblings.

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[54] (French name) Children's garden.

Both my parents speak French. My mother, who has studied till standard VI in a confessional school[55] speaks French very well and, at times, would speak it **a little bit** at home. Both my mother and my brother worked abroad for some time and are fluent in Italian. I am myself learning Hindi now and have encouraged my son who studies at the university to take up Spanish lessons as I believe it will improve his career prospects in the tourist industry."

Dad's philosophy still influences me

I view Jyotee's home as a true reflection of the local linguistic landscape. What determined the importance or status she attributes to these different languages, I wonder. Jyotee explains: "My father considered education as a means to progress in life and therefore encouraged his children to learn English and French. Everyday, we had to listen to the French news on TV. He would make us sit in front of the mirror and practice reading aloud by imitating the newscasters. It would be English and French on alternate days. Dad would also make us write a lot. He often dictated short texts and then corrected orthography mistakes."

I observe that Jyotee's father had a strong influence on her relationship with languages. Jyotee acquiesces and states emphatically, "I'm very fond of learning languages because they are a means of communication. My Daddy put in my mind that: 'If someone speaks English to you, you answer in English. This is politeness.' His philosophy still influences me. I am now a member of a religious association, and because I have difficulties conversing with my *Guruji* [56] and chanting the *Ramayan*[57] , I have enrolled on a course in Hindi. I want to be perfect in *shud* [58] Hindi. As one of the group leaders, I believe I must set the example. I encourage my group members to speak Hindi even if they are not very good at it, as it is through practice that we will improve. At home, I watch Hindi films and I'm attentive to the words and pronunciation. I practice as soon as I have an opportunity to speak the language."

Schools, teachers and languages

Learning through drills

While home proved to be an enabling environment for language learning, school hardly offered Jyotee

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[55] Confessional or RCA (Roman Catholic Aided) schools: free primary schools owned by the Catholic church but that receive grants from the government because they have an open admission policy.
[56] (Hindi word)Teacher
[57] Hindu Holy Scriptures.
[58] (Hindi word) Pure.

any opportunities to learn English.

"When I attended pre-primary school, it was known as *'L'ekol paye'*[59] −because we paid the teacher− or *'Tilekol'*[60] –because young children attended it. We spoke Creole and **very very** little French, such as 'Bonjour. *Tu vas bien?*'[61] Teaching was done through drills. The teacher was not even trained and knew nothing about resources and age-appropriate educational strategies. There were no games, no corners, no story books and no written work as we do now. There was **nothing**. The teacher sang a little song and wrote a,b,c,d on the blackboard. We would then recite the alphabets in English and sing them in French: *'a: ananas, b: boule'*[62]. We just sat on a bench and read: 'I am sitting, I am standing, I am walking, I am drinking'. At noon, I would go back home and the next day we would start all over again." The boredom in Jyotee's voice and the fingers drumming the table are highly indicative of her feelings at that time, but I also detect a note of indignation as she brings out the disparity between the learner-centred approach she professes as a teacher and what she was subjected to.

Contrasting school contexts

As Jyotee goes on to talk about her stint at primary school, she reveals how eventful a phase of her life it was since she had to adjust in varied contexts. "My primary schooling took place at Bright Kids School in Curepipe[63] and St James School in St Julien d'Hotman [64]. At Bright kids, I had a great experience working with Gabby, my standards I and II teacher. She had come from France and encouraged us to speak French. I clearly remember that she used to sing a lot in class and would bring *bonbons limon*[65] for us every Friday. The songs were a real motivation and I didn't want to miss a single day of school. Everyday Gabby taught us a new song and I sang it when I returned home. It is thanks to her that I learnt French.

At school, the language used depended on whom I was talking to. I spoke Creole with my friends but had to address the teacher in French. It was not easy for me because French was not my mother tongue and so I had to practise it. English was spoken during the English class but not taught in an effective way. The teacher merely read comprehension passages and explained these by translating them in French. Then we had to write down answers to the questions. We were not as exposed to English as children

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[59] (Creole term) Refers to pre-primary schools that charged fees.
[60] (Creole term) Literally means 'small school'.
[61] (French utterance)"Good morning. How are you?"
[62] (French utterance)" a for pineapple, b for ball.
[63] A town in the central part of the island.
[64] A village in the east of the island.
[65] (French term)Lemon sweets.

are nowadays through the media and there was no emphasis on spoken English. We were not even encouraged to participate in class. Though English was the medium of instruction, explanations were given in a mixture of English and French.

When I was in Standard V, the family moved to the village of Flacq[66] because my Dad took up a job in a Sugar Estate. At school, I was afraid of the Christian[67] pupils who were boisterous and crude compared to people from town. The teaching approach was similar to that at Bright Kids but the use of French, rather than Creole, was predominant as the white children from the Estate attended the school; French was a sign of their superior status[68]. When they spoke to me, I had to answer in French because it was a matter of prestige. In such situations, I felt very grateful to Gabby, thanks to whom I was conversant in French.

The teacher at St. James School, Mr. Gilbert, was not very *accueillant* [69]. He used to tell me: *'Tu viens de la ville toi, non? Tu viens de la ville. Allez, parles le Français. Parles le Français. Je regarde comment tu parles le Français.'* [70] The Whites and the Blacks[71] were treated differently. Mr. Gilbert was openly more caring and attentive towards the White children while I was merely considered as the daughter of a small driver. I didn't like him. He was very severe and used to smack the children with a ruler. I never had the courage to look at him; I would always look down. Even when I had answers to his questions, I dared not reply. I didn't have friends either. The other children stole my pencils or my eraser and even cheated by copying from my script during the test. There was no motivation to go to school. I would cry every night and tell my Dad: 'Let's go back to *Dadi*' [72]. After two years, I returned to Curepipe to live with my *Dadi*. By then I had passed my Standard VI exams but had not performed as well as I could have if the situation had been different."

The awakening of a love for English

"By the time I went to secondary school, I was fluent in French but not in English because throughout primary school, the emphasis had been on French and written English. But," Jyotee points out with a grimace, "even at secondary school, we learnt English only from textbooks; we would read comprehension passages, answer questions and do grammar exercises. There were no opportunities to

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[66] A village in the east of the island.
[67] Polite way of referring to Creoles as the term 'Creole' is sometimes viewed as being derogatory.
[68] Sugar factories and estates are owned by the Mauritian 'Whites'. Being of French descent, they speak French− hence the perception that this language is a sign of status or prestige.
[69] (French term) Welcoming.
[70] (French utterance)"You come from town, don't you? You come from town. Go on, speak French and I'll see how good you are!"
[71] As opposed to the 'White' owners, the workers, whom Jyotee refers to as "Blacks", belong to the Creole and Asian communities.
[72] (Hindi term) Paternal grandmother.

have conversations. That is why I was stuck whenever I had to speak. Sometimes I remained quiet in class because I was afraid to commit a mistake. Committing mistakes in front of the class would have been so embarrassing as my classmates would have laughed at me. You see, we tend to have a complex when we have to speak English because we are not fluent in it."

Jyotee's eyes suddenly light up. "The person who made me love English and really want to teach it was Miss Naina, my English and Literature teacher, who had come from England. I was very impressed, **really very impressed,** on the first day when she walked into the classroom and introduced herself in a British accent: 'Hello everybody!' Wow! The way she had said 'Hello' made me sit up. When she spoke, it looked like she was playing with the language. I was a very shy girl by nature. I usually sat at the back and hardly spoke. But I **never missed** Miss Naina's class. I used to learn all the quotations from 'Macbeth' by heart and I tried to speak like her. I watched the news just to try to **pronounce** words like her. Yes," Jyotee confirms with a wide smile, "this is when I really started loving English."

"Miss Naina's teaching approach also struck me. While French and Creole were used in other classes, even though English was the medium of instruction, Miss Naina would speak only English. Unlike the other teachers, she knew that we would progress in the language only if we spoke. So she used to prompt us to speak by asking us questions. She encouraged **each and everybody** in the class to speak. This is how I realised that speaking a language is important."

Fate, friends and opportunities

Jyotee's journey from a learner to a teacher was not one she had planned. She tells me that her friends have an important role in shaping her career path: "My friends are a blessing to me. It is thanks to them that I have progressed professionally. I became a teacher due to chance encounters with my friend, Lata. She remembered that I had been very fond of teaching and tried to convince me to join her pre-primary school, Pansies. At first, I hesitated; I was married and had a baby and didn't really feel confident about teaching. Two years later, I met Lata again and, this time, I took up her offer and joined her school. Initially, I was only an observer as everything was new and unknown to me. I just helped Lata to look after the children, like a helper.

Once I had joined the profession, I followed courses in ECE at l'OMEP as professional qualifications were a requirement. There, I befriended Mrs Appadoo who was about to open her own pre-school, Sunny

Hills. She convinced me to join her because she needed my help to set up her school. Along with her, *j'ai organisé l'école*[73] . I set up everything: **every corner, every classroom, everything** from scratch!" Jyotee stresses in a tone that reflects her sense of achievement. "I taught French and was very happy there." And yet, she immediately admits, "Still... I felt restless. I had a strong urge to teach English. Therefore, when ten years later my friend, Renu, mentioned that *Jardin d'Enfants* pre-primary school

needed a teacher, I tried my luck and got the job. Mrs Appadoo did her best to dissuade me, saying that I would be only an assistant but, in my mind, there was nothing like being an assistant teacher. I was motivated by the wish to **move** ahead and **learn** new things. I was going to **learn** English there and would have to find strategies to **teach** English," Jyotee emphasises, full of zeal.

Context, learners and language teaching

Commenting on her teaching approach, Jyotee states, "My teaching approach varied in the different schools where I have worked. At both Pansies and Sunny Hills, the children came from the working class and spoke Creole, some French but no English. The emphasis had been on French because English was foreign to them. Mrs Appadoo used to travel a lot and brought video cassettes demonstrating new strategies but I found it impossible to implement these there. I constantly translated from English to French or Creole − as is the teaching culture in Mauritius − otherwise the children would not have understood anything. At that time, I now realise, my aim had been to teach concepts rather than the language. I was convinced I was doing the right thing, especially as the parents were proud when their children spoke French. I now realise that they were not really conscious of the importance of English. But I must admit that it was not only because of them; neither the director of the school nor I had realised that we had to make an effort to teach the children English as they would never acquire it from their environment."

Jyotee goes on to illustrate how context can influence the teaching strategy by describing her practice at *Jardin d'Enfants*. "Here, I use innovative strategies because English is either the children's mother tongue or the parents speak it as an additional language at home. Moreover, both the school administration and the parents are keen that the children learn English. At first, I shared a class with Claudia, the French teacher. The children were exposed to English half an hour a day through nursery rhymes and stories. Due to the demand from parents who wished to send their children to English medium primary schools, an English classroom was created. That is how I got my own

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[73] (French utterance) I set up the school.

English classroom."

Taking on challenges

While having her own English class can be viewed as a dream come true for Jyotee, she admits, "Working here is **very challenging**. Some children are native speakers and correct me when I commit mistakes. Therefore, I have to make sure that I speak correctly. Also, it is my responsibility to prepare the children who will attend private primary schools like Muswell Primary School. These schools will expect them to have acquired knowledge and skills like phonics, and the ability to read and write simple sentences in English." Since I consider Jyotee's class as an English isle in a French sea, I am curious to know how the school's language policy affects the teaching of English. Jyotee reveals that the predominance of French use does not hamper her attempts to promote the use of English among her learners. "While French is spoken in the rest of the school, in my classroom, all the learning takes place in English."

I was not discouraged

Jyotee's know-how is a skill she developed through sheer hard work and resilience. "When I joined *Jardin d'Enfants,* I did not know what approach to adopt. I was simply told to teach English but no-one told me how!" she explains in a bewildered tone. "But I did not let that discourage me. I searched the Net for ideas, called my friends and borrowed English CDs from Sunny Hill and even Muswell Primary School. I improved my own proficiency in English by listening to the BBC and enrolled for ten-week courses at the British Council for three consecutive years. Through these courses I got to learn about phonics which has become an important element in my teaching approach."

It's English, English, English

Jyotee has come a long way from her first tentative days. "I am much more confident now. I have developed my own teaching programme modelled on the French system that is adopted in this school. I believe it is more appropriate for my learners than the one the ECCEA prepares and expects us to follow. I want my children to feel at ease and get used to English gradually. So, at the start of the academic year in January, I translate my utterances from French to English and English to French. By

the month of March or April, I forget about French completely. I speak only English so that the children get used to the language. It's very important to me that they are happy in my class. If I start by speaking only English, they will not understand anything. They will get bored and lose interest. Charlene will play and Hans will tell me: *'Tu veux que je quitte cette classe là je partes?'* [74] This happened once and has shown me that I must make the children at ease in the language first.

I teach through songs, rhymes, storytelling and conversations and provide a lot of exposure to English in authentic situations. I speak English the whole day; all my activities and explanations are carried out in English." Jyotee drives in the point. "It's English, English, English. When I'm relating a story, for example, I never translate. Instead, I do lots of gestures. I realise that this is what had been lacking in my teaching previously. If ever I speak French, it will be only for children for whom English is foreign, not for everyone. I know about my learners' character, home background and languages they speak at home. This helps me teach them according to their needs. Teaching is all about knowing our learners. Though children tend to speak French among themselves, I remind them to speak English because I have noticed that when I allow them to speak French, it is difficult to get back to English. However, in line with the school philosophy, I respect the child's pace. This works and you can see how, after four months, they are at ease with the language. As soon as we will obtain internet connection in our computer room, I will be able to access **so many** programmes to work with the kids!" Jyotee says enthusiastically, adding, "My resources are very precious to me and I never part from them. You can see some there on the shelves."

Maiba, my epiphany

"I am convinced of my teaching philosophy because of my experience with Maiba, a child from Zimbabwe, five or six years ago. When she joined the school, she spoke very little English and it was very difficult to communicate. So I **had** to make gestures and demonstrate every word I said: 'Come. Let's sit. We're going to have lunch. This is your **plate**.'" Repeating the gestures she had made, Jyotee tells me, "This is how I did it. I **wanted** Maiba to progress in the language. Even at home I would reflect and jot down my ideas for the following day. Gradually, I observed that Maiba started to understand though she would still not speak. When I asked Maiba, 'Where's your plate?' she would go and get it. When Maiba, left school about two years ago, she spoke French and English. She was even translating for the others. It was amazing, simply **a-ma-zing!**" Jyotee emphasises with tears in her eyes. **"I was so happy!** When she left, I cried."

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[74] (French utterance) "Do you want me to leave this classroom?"

Still in the throes of a powerful surge of emotions that grips her as she recollects that moment, Jyotee pulls herself together and pursues, "Gradually, I started to use this method with the Mauritian children also."

English is important

"After twenty years of teaching experience, my view of language learning is clear: Instruction should be in English and French. I'm a Mauritian and realise that we must value our mother tongue, yet introducing Creole at school is not going to help the kids to progress. Are we going to use Creole as an international language? If I were to go back to Sunny Hills or Pansies, I would teach the way I now do because I now realise how important English is. It is as important as French. Unfortunately, we are lagging behind in the way we teach it. If I go back, I will surely encourage my colleagues also to speak and teach English. However, because of the predominance of Creole in the environment there, I may still have to use translation."

Teachers knows what they need

Elaborating on what spurs her on, Jyotee says, "I enjoy every moment at *Jardin d'Enfants* and I'm very attached to my kids. I constantly try new approaches as I want to better myself. Though I have learnt a lot from courses for professional development, at times, I feel the content is not really relevant to our professional needs. Teachers **know** what they need because they are the ones dealing with the children. Right now, I am learning from my colleague, Mrs Ducres, a French teacher who used to work at *Le Lycée*, a private French school. I'm trying to apply what I'm learning about the French system to teach English because I find this approach very effective as it involves lots of manipulation. Every concept, in Mathematics or language, is taught through games or manipulation. Children have to listen and understand. There is no written work except at the end for evaluation. Though I am already trained, I am glad of this opportunity because we never know too much.

I believe that the relationship that our two directors, Christelle and Marie-Anne, have with the staff is also what pushes me to move ahead and excel as a teacher. They always support and advise me. They made me realise that a teacher may not have all the answers and must keep on learning. Here Black and White [75] people work together like a strong team, like a family. Everyone is at par and we call everyone by their first name. It is so different from the way things were at St James School. I therefore want to

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[75] Again, Jyotee refers to people from the 'White' and non-White communities.

make them happy and proud of having a teacher like me."

My focus is always the learners

"There are many teachers in my family but I am not influenced by any of them. For instance, I wouldn't consider my uncle and my aunt as models. They belong to the old school and are very strict. They remind me of Mr. Sumboo, my primary school Maths teacher. He would fill the blackboard with formulae but I didn't understand anything. I would tremble when he sent me to the blackboard. I barely got pass marks in my Maths exams.

To me, a teacher should be very cordial, someone who smiles and makes you at ease in the class. Miss Naina is a real model− the friendly type who really encouraged me to learn. Miss Mira, a lecturer at the MIE where I studied for a Teacher's Diploma in ECE, is someone else who greatly influenced

me. She really helped my friends and me to improve our teaching with the realisation that we should go towards the child; we should put ourselves in the place of the child and try to think like him in order to understand how he will learn. Everything is abstract around him so we have to make things easy. I always try to imagine how my kids are feeling when they are leaving the class. What are they going to take home? Are they going to have a nightmare because the teacher scolded them in class? My focus is always the learners."

End note: always a learner

"For me, a teacher is always a learner. I am 47 years old but I don't think learning will stop here. Every time I go to the office, Christelle corrects my French mistakes. But I don't feel embarrassed; I'm very happy because I'm learning. I learn English from my pupils and even their parents. Since I have joined *Jardin d'Enfants,* I have learnt much and I pray to God that He gives me the capacity and the willingness to keep on learning. I hope I will grow even more."
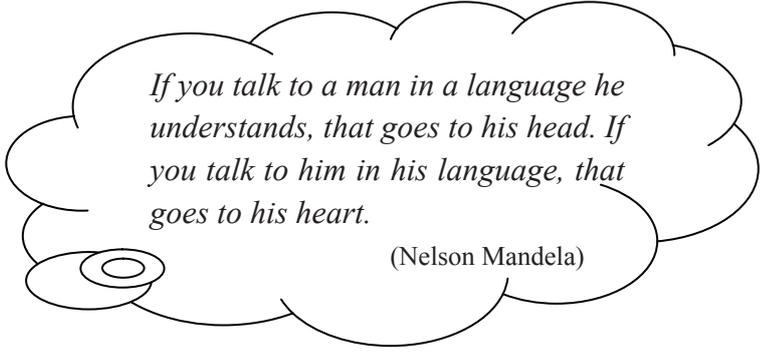
If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

(Nelson Mandela)

1.4 Mala

Mala's classroom and teaching context

We sit in Mala's classroom at *Les Gentils Dauphins* pre-primary school where she has worked for the past twelve years ─ ever since she joined the teaching profession. The school is situated in a rented space and occupies two rooms. With one of these being the nursery, Mala's classroom is quite cramped, so much so that she has to carry out some activities in the adjacent room. Nevertheless, Mala has managed to set up the doll, shop, computer, nature and reading corners.

Les Gentils Dauphins is run by the Happy Family Association that staunchly upholds the rights of the children and, consequently, their freedom of expression. The predominant use of the mother tongue is therefore a marked feature of the school. As such, Mala communicates extensively in Creole, the mother tongue of the majority of the children who attend the school, and the bookshelves include books in Creole, Bhojpuri and Urdu in addition to English and French. Such features demarcate *Les Gentils Dauphins* from the majority of pre-primary schools in Mauritius which tend to promote French and/or English. The children attending this school are mostly from the working class and the frayed resources are indicative of the rudimentary conditions in which Mala operates.

English was never used in my environment

As Mala reminiscences about the past, she explains that, having been brought up and lived in rural areas, namely Montagne Longue[76], Vieux Grand Port, and New Grove[77] , she has never had opportunities nor felt the need to speak English. Creole was predominantly spoken at home and in the neighbourhood.

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[76] Village in the north of the island.
[77] Villages in the south of the island.

"I want to speak English well," Mala confesses, "but it was never used in my environment." When prompted to consider whether her schooling had altered this tendency, Mala shakes her head in negation. In fact, this phase of her life does not appear to have had a significant impact upon her as she finds it hard to retrieve memories. Nevertheless, her reminiscences allow her to put forth the essence of her language experiences. Due to a lack of opportunities to speak English and the use of a traditional teaching approach, Mala, who depicts herself as being shy by nature, was not encouraged to express herself in English. The English language therefore remained foreign to her.

Learning was boring and tiring

"At pre-primary school, I spoke to the teacher in Creole and she spoke half French half Creole. I remember just repeating *'a b c d e f g h'* [78] and *'un deux trois quatre cinq'* [79] after the teacher without understanding. There was only parrot learning [80] and for learners it was boring and too tiring. In those days, teaching was not play- based and fun as it is now.

Primary and secondary school were the same; the teacher spoke French most of the time. I do recall that explanations were given in French while English was hardly ever used. Teacher talk predominated and pupils didn't have the opportunity to say anything. Even though I wasn't so intelligent I knew the answer but I didn't dare express myself in Creole. And yet, when the teacher said the answer, I realised it was correct.

I must admit I'm still a bit like that. My lack of confidence has resulted in an innate fear that makes me apprehensive about what the teacher will say, the language he will use and the way he will talk to me. I can only communicate partly in English as I end up being lost for words. I like speaking English because it allows me to practice speaking the language but, sometimes, I'm not able to convey the message. I believe I do not have enough practice."

We were alienated from the language

I dig further into Mala's school days, curious to know more about her role as a learner. As she looks back on the teaching approach that prevailed in those days, Mala highlights how the passive role imposed upon pupils deterred them from participating.

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[78] Uttered in French
[79] One two three four five
[80] Term used to refer to rote learning

"Only the teachers were at the centre of the class. They wrote and explained all the time. We, pupils, merely sat and listened to them."

She pauses momentarily, musing on the consequences of such an approach and, in a poignant admission, reveals how the system had failed the learners. "There is no doubt that we must practice English in order to master it but the way we were taught alienated us from the language: it was excessively academic with an emphasis on cramming, so much so that we were not able to assimilate anything".

As an aftermath of her schooling, Mala still struggles to grasp all that is said in English and French. Having experienced how teaching can impact negatively on the learning process and on the learner, her voice resonates with dismay as she points out that teaching at tertiary level reproduces the same model. Currently following a Teacher's Certificate in Early Childhood Education course at the MIE, she finds herself in the same predicament. "I always tell the tutors who speak English and French most of the time that, to date, I believe there are students who cannot understand them; there are things we understand but others that we don't."

However, Mala does not attribute her lack of proficiency in English only to her schooling. Acknowledging a personal recognition that English is important, she deplores the way in which personal and contextual factors have undermined her use of the language and hence her resulting lack of proficiency. "The fact that I now work in the field of education has made me realise that English is a very important language. It is the medium of instruction and is spoken in most countries. If someone addresses me in English, I **should** be able to respond in that language. But I didn't speak English at all after school; in fact I wasn't even aware of its importance. I worked in a factory and, in this line of work, you lose all that you have learnt at school. I find that a pity."

Every child is my child

Mala goes on to tell me how, having herself experienced a teaching approach that was not conducive to language learning, she is determined to provide her own pupils with more enriching experiences. Her pupils are her central consideration. "I do not want to replicate an approach that children will find boring. Teachers must be active and caring so that the children enjoy learning. We must embrace the philosophy whereby every child is my child." As though to testify for what she has just said, Mala reminiscences about her primary school teacher, Jocelyn, one of the few teachers she actually remembers. "Jocelyn always loved her pupils. When you work with children, you must love them. If you don't love children, it's better not to join this profession."

Everything depends on the children's background

What does placing the children at the centre entail? Mala unhesitatingly points out that one must take into account the children's social background and developmental stage. Whilst acknowledging the importance of English, she brushes aside claims that pre-primary schooling should equip pupils with an adequate knowledge of English to be able to cope at primary school.

"No, no, no, no," she states categorically, "I don't agree with this. The children will learn the language gradually. Once they have joined primary school, they can be taught English otherwise they will face difficulties in the other subjects. At pre-primary level, we must expose children to simple words in English. When they have acquired basic vocabulary, learning the language becomes easier. Everything depends on the children's background. Most of the children attending my school come from deprived areas and their mother tongue is Creole. People from the upper classes usually speak a second language with their children so they have fewer difficulties to learn it."

Children must express themselves in their mother tongue

Mala's passionate speech leaves no doubt that her sensitivity to the children's predicament is a consequence of her own experiences. This impression is confirmed when Mala states her conviction that the use of the children's mother tongue plays a central a role in her teaching.

"We mustn't consider our mother tongue as being inferior. We must value it because it is **our** language. Had we had lived in England, we would have spoken English and, in France, we would have spoken French; so why shouldn't we speak Creole?" she asks pointedly. "Compelling children to speak English is not a good way to teach them. The children must express themselves in their mother tongue ─ be it Creole, English or French. When the children have just left home to join pre-primary school, they are like new born babies who have just entered a new world. It is crucial to avoid creating an abrupt disruption in their lives. Teaching children demands a different approach. If we teach the children another language at this point, it becomes too difficult for them to learn it. But if we speak their mother tongue, the children are happy and blossom. They feel close to us and tell us whatever is on their mind. This is something they wouldn't have been able to do if they had to use another language. I know how it feels because this is what I had experienced as a child."

Pointing to the book corner, Mala pursues: "Most of the story books are quadrilingual taking into

account the languages in our setting. I always narrate the stories in Creole first ─ or Bhojpuri if we have children speaking this language ─ so that they can understand. It is worth seeing how eagerly the children take the books and relate the story to their friends when they come in the morning!" Mala exclaims enthusiastically, her eyes lighting up. "You will agree that witnessing such an interest in books in young children is very rare. That's why, although I was initially sceptical about the benefits of using the children's mother tongue, I am now fully convinced of its benefits". She shows me the children's drawings and points to ad verbatim extracts from their conversation. I note that the first is in Creole while the second in English and Hindi. "These are children's drawings based on a story we had read. Their descriptions, which were given in their mother tongue, clearly show that they have understood the story. Had I compelled them to speak English, they would not have uttered a word!" On hearing Mala's categorical statement, I realise that her advocacy of the use of the mother tongue is not merely due to the language policy of the school but an expression of her own belief.
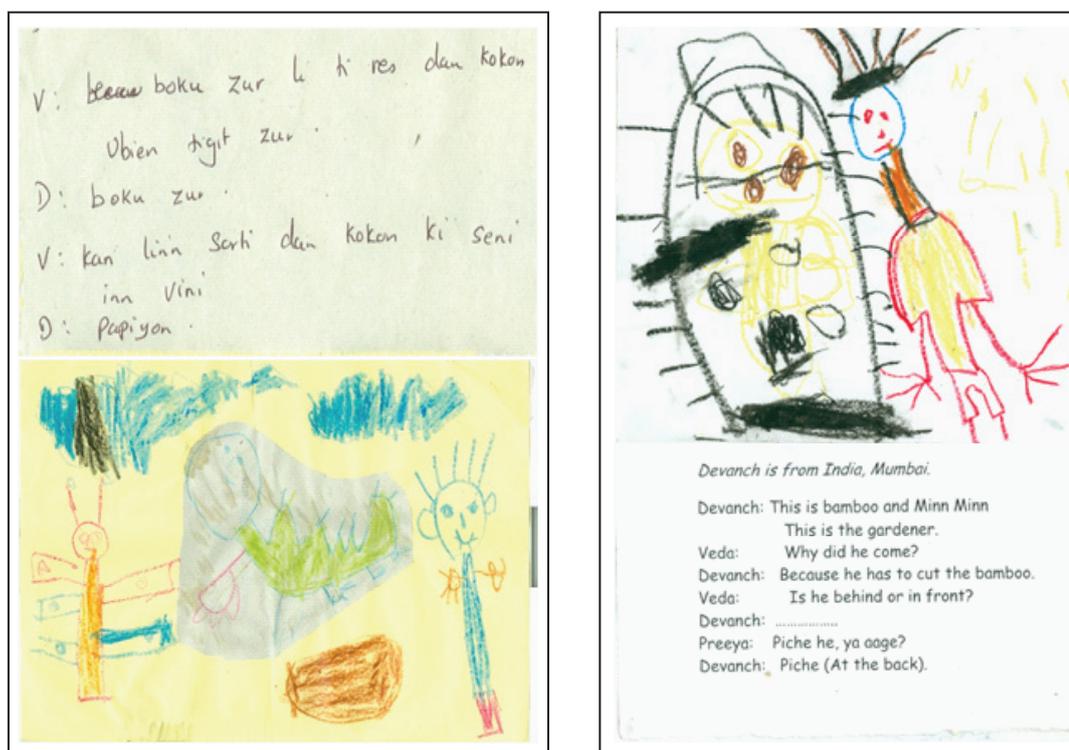
Figure 7: Samples of children's work

Contextualised and meaningful learning

Mala goes on to elaborate on her pedagogical stance. Her confidence, undoubtedly derived from successful experiences of practice, makes her speak with much assurance. As I listen to her, I cannot help comparing the image she now projects with the shy and uncertain person she has described herself

as being. "I present children with concrete experiences so that language learning is contextualised and meaningful. For example, if I am teaching the nursery rhyme "One two tie my shoe, three four knock at the door", I play la *marelle* [81] with the children. In this way, the children acquire the vocabulary. They may not end up learning everything but do learn numbers and key words like 'tie my shoe' and 'door'. Through constant repetition I ensure that they remember these. The children enjoy learning through this approach.

I also base myself on the stories that we have read to develop the children's writing skills and knowledge of sounds. I prompt them to formulate a sentence based on a story we read earlier. I then write the sentence on a strip of paper and read it to them before cutting it out like a puzzle. The children re-order the jumbled words through word-to-word matching and copy the sentence. I also draw their attention to specific sounds that have been introduced through the story— just like we worked on the /s/ sound in the syllables: sa, se, si, so, sou this morning after we had read *'Sinn sinn'*. The children sing a song with the syllables as a means of consolidating learning."

"I always use songs, nursery rhymes and actions to teach," Mala points out. "For every story, I use a song that is thematically relevant. For instance, if I'm working on '*Pekoy al lapes*'[82], we sing the French song: 'Pour *nager dans l'eau'* [83] and the Creole song: *'Li naze dans dilo'*[84]. When reference is made to corals, I show the children a real one. We also mime while singing because actions facilitate understanding. Once the children have learnt the vocabulary and grasped the concept, they are eager to participate when we recite and mime the English nursery rhyme. You see, if I had spoken English or French, they would not have responded in the same way. Teaching would have been more difficult. But this does not mean that I never introduce the children to English nursery rhymes straight away," Mala quickly puts in, as if to prevent me from drawing hasty and erroneous conclusions about her teaching approach. "When I do, I ask them what the words mean in Creole. For the nursery rhyme 'Hop hop hop to the shop', I ask them: *'Laboutik, kouma apele? Kouma nou dir li an Angle la? Kouma nou dir bonbon?'* [85] Those who remember will answer. This is what I have learnt at *Les Gentils Dauphins.''*

I cannot help wondering whether Mala is tempted to speak Creole more frequently because of her own limitations in English but she counters this thought by stating: "Speaking English is not a problem because I plan my lessons carefully and use appropriate resources. Also, I can cope more easily thanks to having gained in maturity."

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[81] Hopscotch, traditionally known as "la marelle" in Mauritius.
[82] (Creole utterance) "Pekoy goes fishing".
[83] (French utterance) "To swim in the water".
[84] (Creole utterance) "He swims in the water".
[85] (Creole utterance) "How do you say 'shop'? How do you say it in English? How do you say 'sweet'"?

I gradually developed professional competencies

There is no doubt to me that Mala owes much of her professional growth to her experience at *Les Gentils Dauphins*. In fact, her discourse resonates with their philosophy. When I put the question to her, Mala unhesitatingly declares her gratitude to all the members of Happy Family Association especially the secretary, Mrs Sushilla, who has played a key role in her progress.

"It is in fact thanks to Mrs Sushilla that I became a teacher. My daughter and my son used to attend the school. One day Mrs Sushilla asked me to join *Les Gentils Dauphins* as a teacher and sent me to follow professional courses. Moreover, she is always pressing me to speak English so as to improve my fluency. I have always worked with Mrs Sushilla and have learnt a lot from her. I constantly observe her working with the children. When she tells them a story for instance, I lend an ear even if I am busy doing something else. I quickly jot down her strategies and, when I get back home, I write my notes neatly. In this manner, I've learnt many things. I gradually developed professional competencies. I learnt that, when you use a song or nursery rhyme, you move from concrete to abstract to help children learn. The courses dispensed by the association have equipped me with practical skills that enable me to manage a pre-primary school.

On the other hand, at the MIE, I have observed that there is a tendency to be more theoretical and focus on the second and third languages instead. I'm not saying that I have not gained anything from my courses. I have learnt a lot from the MIE; apart from having been more exposed to English and having had the opportunity to use it more frequently, I have learnt how to develop a programme, carry out long term and short term planning and organise activities in the six areas of learning as stipulated in the National Curriculum Framework. Yet, there are things that I cannot implement; I cannot compel children to speak a language that is not theirs. I must go according to their age and pace if I want my teaching to be effective. I must however point out that, if I want to adopt a new strategy, I must obtain the consent of the members of the association beforehand. Many members have followed courses and we can discuss new strategies, but it is necessary to obtain everyone's consent."

Learning never stops

Mala's trajectory has led her to a point where she can reconcile personal and professional targets. Even as she charts the growth of her pupils, Mala aspires to constant self-improvement. "Becoming a

teacher represents more than taking up a new job; it signifies a new page of my life. My entry into this profession coincides with a painful period ─ my divorce. I forgot my personal problems by focusing on my career. Now, I am determined to become better in English. I read English books avidly and, as from this year, have started speaking English at home with my children because it is also important for them to be fluent in this language."

Mala gazes into the distance: "I started from scratch and progressed gradually to where I am today. Learning never stops; like a bird, I wish to constantly soar towards new heights."

When you know better, you do better.

(Maya Angelou)
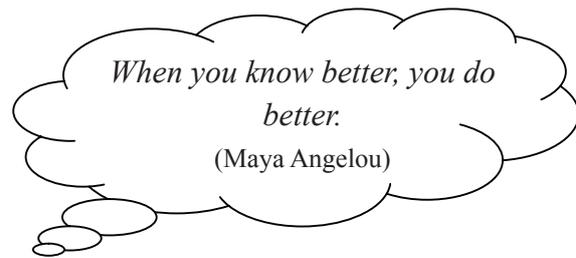
1.5 Chantal

Becoming an English teacher

With twenty two years of experience, all spent at *Les Joyeux Bambins*[86] pre-primary school, Chantal is now one of the senior-most teachers. *Les Joyeux Bambins* is a French medium school but English is taught twice a week to children who will join English medium primary schools. Though she had started her career as a French teacher, Chantal was called upon to replace the English teacher who had left because she had been schooled in the British system. Chantal expresses herself with ease and fluency in French but is reticent to speak English. The question about how she copes with having to teach English thus arises naturally. With a smile, Chantal points out that teaching young learners English is not problematic but she is much more at ease conversing in French. "I teach English but I'm not ashamed to admit that there are certain basic words that I do not know. This is because I do not speak English in daily life. It's a subject I teach."

This opening discussion turns out to be the trigger of Chantal's recollections on becoming an English teacher.

Initially, I found it very difficult

"Initially, I remember finding it very difficult. I wondered whether the children would understand me so I only introduced simple vocabulary such as 'boy', 'girl' and 'school'. I taught them to answer basic questions like: 'What is your name?' I thought that it would be difficult to speak English with young children so I always translated from French to English. I would ask the children: *Comment est-ce qu'on dit 'un garçon'?*[87] A boy. Then we would play games such as 'Stand up all the boys; stand up all the girls'. We also sang nursery rhymes and recited short poems."

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[86] (French name) The Cheerful Children.
[87] (French utterance) "How do we say 'boy'?"

My strategies have evolved

"Over the years, my strategies have evolved. With experience, one realises that one cannot stagnate. When I step into the classroom, the children are made aware that I have come to teach English. I find it necessary to mould my teaching according to the situation. When I teach my colleague Linda's class, it's easier to mark the transition to English than it is with my own class where I teach all the learning areas using French as medium. But still, I alter my personality and my approach so that pupils tune in to the English lesson. For instance, I role play to create a context and use more gestures and songs.

During the first lesson, I'm tolerant about the use of French but eventually, I move on to English. I encourage the pupils to address me in English even when they have queries or request the permission to go to the toilet. 'I'm here to teach you English.' I remind them. 'How do we say this in English?' And we work towards the formulation together. When the language taught emanates from real situations, it becomes more meaningful and easier to acquire."

It is important to speak the target language

"I became conscious that it's important to speak the target language ─ be it English or French─ even with young ones. They grasp the meaning when verbal utterances are accompanied by gestures or mimes. This awareness came through my encounter with Mrs Angela, a Japanese lady, who wanted to learn French. I taught her the language by conversing with her. And so, in my classroom, I use role plays frequently in addition to games and songs. My teaching is interactive and I place the pupils in situations so that we can have short contextualised conversations. For instance, we pretend we have met on the road and so practice greetings. First, I demonstrate how to use the language structure by enacting the situation with one of the pupils ─ often those who are English speakers because children learn from each other. Then I pair up the children for practice. This is done a few times to help consolidation and memorisation of the vocabulary and language structures introduced." Chantal is full of verve as she describes her approach and her voice brims with confidence and passion. "I must say that the children **really** love it! They jump up and down shouting: *'Chantal, moi j'ai pas fait! Chantal, moi il faut que j'essaye!'*[88] "

Children like it when teaching is lively

Chantal laughs out loud as she goes on. "When we sing rhymes, I deliberately commit mistakes. I sing,

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[88] (French utterance) "Chantal, I haven't had a turn yet! Chantal, I must try it!"

'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' and touch my nose instead of my head. The children immediately cry out: *'Chantal, c'est pas ta tête! C'est ton nez!'* [89] 'Oh my God, where is my head? Have you seen my head?' I cry out feigning panic. They laugh and show me my head. You see, children like it when teaching is lively and fun. Time flies during these twenty minutes sessions. My focus is on oral rather than written skills. It's only when the children have understood the concepts in English and learnt the vocabulary that I give them written tasks on worksheets. This is usually done during the last term to apprise parents of what their children have learnt but, for me, it is also a means of assessing what they have learnt."

Dealing with parental expectations

At the mention of parents, Chantal sobers down. "I'm surprised to see that modern parents uphold traditional notions of education. They are concerned about how far their children have learnt the alphabets. I find it important to apprise them about what I teach and how I go about it. They have to understand that their children will gradually learn the alphabets. My aim is to help them discover this new language, namely English, and develop an interest in acquiring it. At pre-primary level, we equip them with the key vocabulary as a foundation; they will gradually learn the language when they join primary school."

We never spoke English

When prompted to reflect on the way she herself learnt English, Chantal highlights the fluctuating presence of this language in the different phases of her life. "At home, I spoke French with my parents and siblings, but Creole with my cousins. We **never** spoke English. At Amazing Kids, the pre-primary school I attended, teaching was traditional. Mrs Anna, our teacher, owned the school. She generally spoke French but did teach us some words in English like 'boy' and 'girl'. These were in fact words that were taught at primary school. We also had to learn the alphabets and numbers by heart through rote learning and write these on our slate. We were even taught addition."

But far from being critical of a teacher who had no notion of Early Childhood Education, Chantal concedes, "It's a pity that, in those days, pre-primary teachers were not trained and so were unable to establish the right conditions for the children to learn English. Though Mrs Anna did make us sing nursery rhymes and recite poems, her teaching programme was too advanced and her approach

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[89] (French utterance) "Oh Chantal, this is not your head! It's your nose!"

inappropriate for young learners. When she introduced a word, she would go on and on repeating it!

I also encountered French predominantly at primary and secondary school even though these institutions were supposed to be following the British system and thus use English as the medium of instruction. Most teachers had the tendency to translate extensively or straightaway provide explanations in French to help students understand. I spoke Creole with my friends. You see, Creole is our mother tongue so it's natural that we should use it during informal occasions, like when we socialise. Still, I must say that school remains **the** place which allowed me to learn English. It was **only there** that I was in contact with the language, although I must admit that this was quite limited."

Teachers have a key role

As she reflects further on her language learning experiences, Chantal highlights the key role that her teachers played in the learning process, not merely due to their teaching but more so through the type of relationship and atmosphere they established.

"My standard V and VI teacher, Miss Isabelle, had a good relationship with the pupils and was very supportive of our tentative endeavours to speak English. She promoted participation by helping us to express ourselves. This is what encouraged us to talk. Her lessons were always lively and she would carry out group work especially when we had to write compositions. Thus all peers shared their ideas and we learnt from one another. My classmates and I interacted in French and, at times, Creole during the group work because it came more naturally to us but Miss Isabelle always spoke English. The teachers in primary school gave individual attention to the pupils and were able to cater to their needs. This is what allowed us to learn English despite the predominance of the traditional approach.

At secondary school, though students still spoke Creole among themselves, English was used more often during teaching and French less frequently. By the time we were in Form V, we were told to use English more often. While it's true that we were more exposed to English at secondary level, I must say that there was not enough consideration on behalf of the teachers for those who could not understand. I was a very shy student and never dared tell the teachers that I had not understood. I realise that lack of teacher support is detrimental to language learning."

Fighting for my dream
Chantal's reminiscences take her to the early days when she was still struggling to fulfill her dream of

becoming a pre-primary teacher.

"I fought against my parents to embrace a teaching career. I lived on a sugar estate in the south of the island and would wake up at five in the morning to go to work. Everyday, I would leave the house in tears, withstanding my parents' berating. I stood against many other difficulties. While following a course in Early Childhood Education in Reunion Island, I had to interrupt my studies for a year and take up a job in order to pay the university fees. My parents refused to help me because they wanted me to be a secretary. In those days, this job was viewed as a symbol of achievement by middle class catholic families. These were the circumstances in which I underwent my training but **I was bent upon** becoming a teacher."

My mother inspired me

Now, years later, Chantal is able to recall these days with composure and she smiles as she pursues, "I love children and I love being in their world. I feel good in it because it's so lively! At least I'm not condemned to sitting behind a desk passively!" she laughs. "Strangely enough," Chantal comments, "though my mother opposed my choice of profession, she herself introduced me to the world of teaching and inspired me. She used to run a pre-primary school before she got married and later on taught Catechism to the children in our parish. I would follow her there and got my first taste of teaching when I taught the younger children. I relished the experience and learnt teaching skills by observing my mother. She loved children and made her teaching lively and appealing to them. She enjoyed singing and carried out outdoor activities rather than indulge in traditional teaching! She had a strong impact on her pupils as even today, when I meet some of them, they tell me: 'Your mother was my teacher!'"

I was pushed into challenging situations

Chantal distinctly recalls her initial days as a teacher. "I was a very shy person by nature. While I was studying in Reunion Island, my tutors had, to an extent, compelled me to come out of my shell by making me participate in project presentations. I recall being in tears because I dreaded those moments so much! When I joined *Les Joyeaux Lutins*, I was still shy. It is thanks to Simone, my director at that time, that I developed self-confidence. Simone always pushed me into challenging situations without giving me the chance to refuse. For instance, on the eve of the school show or sports day, she would simply tell me, 'Chantal, get ready; tomorrow you will address the parents.' Given that she was the director, I couldn't refuse! So I threw myself into it. Though it was difficult at first, I gradually

developed self assurance ─ so much so that I can now face any situation. I am really indebted to Simone for this transformation."

Innovation is the key to growth

Chantal also attributes her professional growth to Simone whom she depicts as her mentor. Chantal cannot help juxtaposing the training courses in Early Childhood Education offered locally by institutions such as the ECCEA , CEDEM[90] , or l'OMEP that she has attended and Simone's advice to herself and her colleagues. She deems that, while the courses were too theoretical in nature and did not equip teachers with practical pedagogical knowledge that are more useful in classroom situations, Simone always encouraged them to constantly innovate their teaching by engaging in research: "She would give us books, worksheets, games and so on saying, 'Here are some tools but you must constantly look for something new. **Go and seek new strategies!** Be creative; **do not repeat** the same ones. Do not always use worksheets. Make the children move; go outside!' I now give this invaluable advice to my younger colleagues who haven't had the chance to meet Simone. I have realised that innovation is the key to growth and becoming a good teacher."

Remaining updated about educational trends

When she ponders over the influences that shape her teaching approach, Chantal brings forth a plethora of factors. "I believe it is important to remain updated about educational trends. Teaching young children does not imply cutting oneself away from the rest of the schooling system. On the contrary, it's essential to know what is being taught at primary and secondary levels in order to prepare the children aptly. It's also important to move with the new generation; I cannot impose things from the past generation on them. I therefore took the habit of leafing through my children's exercise books and books when they returned from school. By doing so, I got to know what is being taught and what trends are prevailing. For instance, I noted that their fluency in English was largely due to the strong reading culture in their primary school, the School of the Holy Child. The emphasis was not only on reading but also on ensuring that the children understood what they read as opposed to the practice in many schools where children merely mouth the words on the page without grasping the meaning.

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[90] *Centre d'Education et de Developpement pour les Enfants Mauriciens*: A non-governmental organisation that caters for the education of children said to be 'vulnerable', such as orphans, handicapped, victims of abuse, poor children and street children.

Cross influences between different levels of schooling

What also helps me maintain contact with the primary and secondary programme is the fact that I work closely with some teachers at the School of the Holy Child and I coach older learners privately to help them overcome learning difficulties in English. Interestingly, my connection with these people has triggered an awareness of the cross-influences between the different levels. If working with older children allows me to better prepare my own pupils for forthcoming schooling, my experience in teaching at pre-primary level enables me to better support older students, who improve considerably. I used audio tapes with Sophie, one of the girls I helped, to expose her to the sounds of English. From there, we worked on the words. I created puzzles by cutting out words for her to join. Her teacher was amazed at her progress and also adopted the same strategies. I also taught Christophe who was way behind his peers. Working with him required much patience. I introduced letters and words and then worked on his writing, once again using methods that are used at pre-primary level. He was involved in activities where he had to count items, look for the corresponding number and paste it. I never use traditional teaching approaches which rely on rote learning. Through activity-based teaching, I make the children think critically. For instance, I mix up all the verb tenses and they have to choose the correct tense. We then have matching tasks. All these work out successfully."

One must be open to new ways

Chantal pauses for a while, mulling over the issue, before continuing, "There is much trial and error that goes on in teaching. I can never vouch for the success of a method beforehand but, as I have just said, one must always be open to new ways of teaching and keep on learning. That's the only way to improve. I became aware of a whole range of teaching strategies by watching foreign educational programmes on TV. I even learn from my young pre-primary pupils; I acquire vocabulary from the native English speakers[91] and I also take the children's suggestions in relation to the way I teach. If they want to play a game, I modify my teaching plan. It is wrong to think that children are merely learners and can teach us nothing. We must always bear in mind that we too can learn from them."

Teacher as entertainer and performer

As she wraps up her recollections, Chantal points to the children playing outside and ardently states, "Children are full of live. We cannot teach them in a formal and traditional way by merely translating or

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[91] The term is here used to designate both foreign and Mauritian children who speak English as a first language.

making them repeat endlessly. **No!** I can vouch from experience that they will hate it. We need to move about and jump, sing and play games. This is what childhood is about. One must be an entertainer, a performer. Children will love it; they will love **you** and this bonding will facilitate learning. You know, they even address me in English in the yard during the break. I am a firm believer in the notion of teacher as performer and teacher as entertainer. That's not difficult to achieve if you love what you're doing. If you work with children, it's important to love them.

This is the motivation to constantly improve. I witnessed this in my mother and this is what I too experience."

Section 2: Insights from the teachers' journeys

An examination of the narratives leads to the affirmation that teacher identity formation cannot be narrowed down to a single factor or site as a multiplicity of forces act upon and influence the process whereby teachers' selves are formed. The recollections of all the participants reinforce the notion of teacher development as an on-going process during which the shaping of the teachers' pedagogical stance is subject to several influential factors in the course of their lives ─ from childhood to adulthood. The stories bring out how the home, the school and teacher education programmes impact upon their evolving notions of what it means to be a teacher. They reveal that elements of both local and foreign contexts have as powerful an influence on the teachers' selves. Contrary to the image of teachers as deficit, the stories prominently showcase teachers as masters of their pedagogical practices, forging their approach to the tune of their past experiences as learners and in the light of the needs of their own learners. The informal experiences of teachers are seen to be as telling as formal experiences and turn out to be THE feature that impacts most significantly on the teachers. Early experiences of language use in the home become the determining factor in eventual language choices and preferred languages. Budding notions of language and pedagogy emanate from the home environment and are reinforced in the later years. The lived language experiences of the teachers have frequently taught them more about pedagogy than what is formally advocated. Enlightened by their own experiences as learners (of rejection and alienation in the classroom but also of fascinating and innovative English teachers and lessons), teachers espouse a teaching philosophy that is child- friendly; they adopt an approach that is inclusive and this concern for making the child feel included overshadows purely academic considerations. It is nevertheless worth noting that certain deliberate or incidental supportive structures enable teachers to exert agency. Some of these are hazy educational policy where the stance regarding language teaching is quite imprecise (as brought out in Chapter 2), democratic management styles which give teachers a

free hand with their teaching approach and a school language policy that is in tune with the teachers'.

The narratives have also provided an insight into the consonances and dissonances in the teachers' journeys. While the tendency in research is often to slot down or categorise to better understand aphenomenon, the process of becoming teachers cannot be viewed through reductionist lenses since forces impact upon individuals differently. Even as they evolve in similar contexts, teachers are individualistic beings ─ each with her story and her personality, as the stories reveal. The paths that they forge are thus distinct and undoubtedly deserve further scrutiny. This is what I propose to do in the forthcoming chapters. The following chapter will expand the scope of the analysis by looking more

closely into the range of factors that influence teacher development in order to better grasp the manner in which these different factors impact upon them.

Chapter summary

The narratives have brought out the multiplicity of factors that act upon the teachers in different ways and at different points in time. They have shed light upon teacher development as a process that spans over time and contexts. They have also presented teachers as agentic beings capable of gearing their teaching in the direction they deem appropriate in relation to their learners who remain their central consideration. It was noted that enabling environments, such as democratic management styles in the school, foster such agency. While similarities are noticeable in the different journeys, the narratives are however indicative of the fact that the teachers' selves are shaped up differently as the stimuli to their growth and the manner in which they respond to these are varied. The initial findings thus point to the need to further examine the factors that influence teacher identity development in order to better understand the *becoming*.

CHAPTER 5

Reading more from the tales: cross-case comparisons

Introduction

The narrative analysis stage brought to the fore the salient features of the participants' journey within the complex Mauritian socio-linguistic and socio-cultural terrains. As the teachers went down memory lane, recollecting their encounters with the English language, their stories were tinged with relived emotions and with reflections on particular events or people. The participants constantly shifted their positioning from narrator to character and commentator ─ as discussed in chapter 3. This multiple positioning was valuable as it added layers of meaning to the narration, for instance, by indicating what happened, what sentiments were aroused and what the experience brought. Further, it created links between the different phases of the participants' lives, showing how the effect of certain factors does not die out but can permeate one's existence. The data generated was indeed rich and impregnated with the flavour of each participant's unique experiences. This first level of analysis was a significant step towards better understanding the phenomenon under study and towards the next level of analysis.

Orientation to this chapter

This chapter comprises two sections. Section 1 names the different themes that emerged during the process of narrative analysis. It explains how the data was refined and reduced during a two-step process that included: (i) putting together themes that belonged to the same category and (ii) classifying the themes into main and sub-themes. This rearrangement, which allowed a more consistent approach to data analysis, is then illustrated. It is followed by an in-depth thematic cross-case analysis where each theme is examined in each of the narratives.

Section 2 sums up the main findings. It shows that a variety of factors influenced the participants' conceptions of English and that the influences of these factors transcended permeable contextual boundaries. It also highlights the uniqueness of every journey and stresses on teacher agency as an important feature in the development of teacher's pedagogical practices.

Insights obtained from this phase of the study are used to draw initial conclusions.

Section 1: Thematic analysis

Following the production of the narratives, I engaged in their analysis. I opted for an inductive and grounded approach to identify the themes emerging from each narrative given that this study is based on the interpretivist paradigm and recognises the subjective and contextualised nature of experiences. I thereby became aware of the multiplicity of factors that impacted on teacher development in either similar or different ways influencing each participant in the process of learning English and becoming a teacher. The findings were displayed in a grid (see Appendix xix) which revealed that the themes had resonances with more than one narrative. It also became apparent that the language experiences of individuals in a multi-lingual context converged and diverged at different points and with respect to different factors. The themes were therefore analysed across the five narratives. Through this approach, I was in a position to note the extent to which and the way in which each factor impacted upon individual participants, thereby shaping their conceptions of the English language and their pedagogical approach while teaching it. At this stage of the analysis, the themes that emerged from the narratives with regard to factors influencing the biographical language experiences of the pre- primary educators were as given in Figure 8 below:
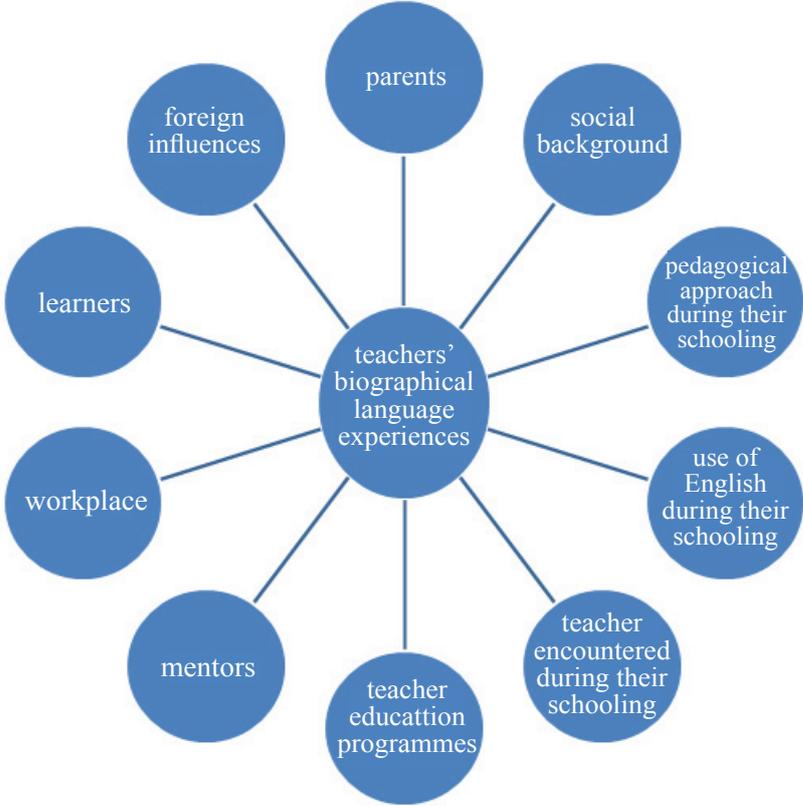
Figure 8: Factors influencing teachers' biographical experiences of language learning

For a more focused study of these themes, the categories were refined and reorganised. Sub-themes were subsumed under broader themes and themes that cut across the main themes, highlighting

concurrent and enmeshed influences, were identified as illustrated in Table 5 below:

Themes cutting across	Main themes	Sub-themes
Personality traits Foreign influences	Home	Family Social background
	School as learning context	Pedagogical approach Use of English Teachers
	School as teaching context	Institutional climate Mentors Learners
	Teacher Education Programmes	

Table 5: Classification of the themes from the narratives

Table 5 illustrates the classification of themes. We note four main themes, namely: home, school as learning context, school as teaching context, and teacher education programmes. They represent significant contexts in the participants' biography. The sub-themes, which vary according to the main themes, are indicative of the specific factors that influenced the teachers' language experiences in each context. They are: family, social background, pedagogical approach, use of English, teachers, institutional climate, mentors and learners. Personality traits and foreign influences exert a force in conjunction with other factors. As such, they have not been slotted into a specific category. The manner in which each factor impacted upon the participants' language learning experiences will now be analysed and discussed.

5.1.1 Home

The home comprises the family members, namely parents, siblings and relatives. This category also encompasses the socio-economic background which the participants belonged to.

5.1.1.1 Family

The family is the earliest and one of the most powerful forces that shape the participants' language representations. Family set-ups, which vary from single parent to extended families, are seen to map

out the language environment within which individuals grow. Interaction with various members establishes the participants' language use from an early age. For instance, Jyotee's childhood was spent in the midst of her parents, grandmother and aunts with the result that she became conversant in Creole, Bhojpuri and, to an extent, French:

> "Home has always been a place where several languages were used. I lived in an extended family when I was a kid. My grandma and my aunts spoke Bhojpuri... Even now, I speak Bhojpuri with older family members. Otherwise, I spoke Creole with my parents and siblings. Both my parents speak French."
>
> (Extract from Jyotee's narrative, pp. 98-99)

On the other hand, Mala's home language use was limited to Creole given the more restrained linguistic repertoire in her home:

> "...she has never had opportunities nor felt the need to speak English. Creole was predominantly spoken at home and in the neighbourhood."
>
> (Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 108

Within the family unit, parents stood out as the ones who established the purpose for which English had to be learnt: Jyotee's father drove in the need for his children to be fluent in English and French, and supported them in this endeavour. English was thus presented as a language with economic and cultural capital as well as one that served a communicative function:

> "My father considered education as a means to progress in life and therefore encouraged his children to learn English and French. ... I'm very fond of learning languages because they are a means of communication. My Daddy put in my mind that: 'If someone speaks English to you, you answer in English. This is politeness.'"
>
> (Extract from Jyotee's narrative, p. 99)

Sandy's parents made deliberate choices so that the schools their children attended fostered the use of English and/or French. They also enforced the unwritten rule that their children must read extensively for vocabulary acquisition. Sandy's mother, who herself lacked fluency in English, encouraged her children to learn the language. She bought books, met the teachers and even instated alternate French and English-speaking days at home:

> "The unspoken contract between us was having to read extensively in order to develop our vocabulary and speak fluently, read and write in both English and French, in exchange of the freedom we enjoyed. So I grew up reading and I just love books!"
>
> (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 82)

On the other hand, Sandy's parents looked down upon Creole − an attitude Sandy duly imbibed as it was reinforced in the schools she had attended. Some parents nonetheless played a less prominent role than others since, at the other extreme, we note that Chantal's and Mala's parents never consciously exerted a push towards learning English. Both these participants therefore grew up operating in 'French/Creole' and 'Creole only' environments respectively, and encountered English only in an academic setting. They are the two participants for whom the foreignness of the English language culminated into a feeling of isolation in the classroom.

The home however went beyond merely influencing the participants' predisposition or attitude towards languages. Early notions of pedagogy also dawned upon them on this site. This was, at times, in overt circumstances, such as in the case of Chantal who accompanied her mother to Catechism classes and observed her in action:

> "I relished the experience and learnt teaching skills by observing my mother. She loved children and made her teaching lively and appealing to them. She enjoyed singing and carried out outdoor activities rather than indulge in traditional teaching!"
>
> (Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 120)

In other cases, participants drew upon the type of learning experiences they went through and inferred pedagogical principles. From her father, Jyotee learnt that language learning depended on language use and on making conscious and continuous efforts towards mastery. Similarly, Sandy realised that exposure to and the use of language was important as a consequence of her mother's push towards reading and speaking English. Preety's use of English in the home was not substantial, yet she appreciated the opportunities to speak English thanks to the visits of her relatives from England and understood that language use sharpens proficiency.

Conversely, Mala's home did not convey any explicit messages concerning teaching. Rather, the absence of English in her immediate environment resulted in her privileging a bilingual approach to teach languages as this makes the mother tongue a prime consideration.

5.1.1.2 Social background

The participants' social background is also seen to impact on language use. In fact, social background is determined by factors such as ethnicity, economic status and geographical location. Preety's case is an apt illustration: Preety is Indo-Mauritian, of Hindu heritage. She initially lived in an urban area in the

midst of educated family members. Her language repertoire constituted Creole for daily communication and English during the visits of her relatives who had settled in the UK:

> "The family in Curepipe was educated and could speak some English. I also had three uncles who lived in England. We spoke only Creole at home but, when my uncles and cousins came to Mauritius, we spoke English."
>
> (Extract from Preety's narrative, p. 91)

Following the demise of her father, she shifted to a rural area to live in a housing complex with her grandmother. Her repertoire was then reconstituted to include Bhojpuri, to communicate with her grandmother, and French, to interact with her neighbours. English became relegated to rare uses:

> "We did not speak that much English there. We spoke French with the neighbours and Creole at home. Only my grandmother spoke Bhojpuri."
>
> (Extract from Preety's narrative, p.91)

Planned or unforeseen events in the family that brought about a change in the geographical location placed the participants in different linguistic environments that influenced their language use. If Preety's and also Jyotee's narratives bring out language shifts locally, Sandy's narrative shows how individuals' outlook towards languages can change during trips abroad. Sandy's parents could afford to take the family to Australia on holidays. Placed in authentic communicative situations, Sandy discovered the value of English as a tool for communication and as a language with cultural affiliations. As opposed to most of the participants for whom English remained an academic subject, the language acquired an added dimension for Sandy:

> "I was aware that I could speak another language because I had been to the country where you apply it whereas, here, where are you going to speak English apart from in one or two English classes that you have at school?"
>
> (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 85)

Sandy's observation is a comment on the limitations of the local context and schooling system in promoting the English language. Nevertheless, in the study, school emerged as an influential factor since it was the site where participants experienced the use and teaching of English from a dual perspective: initially as learners and eventually as trainee teachers and/or teachers.

5.1.2 School as a learning context

As a learning context, this category comprises the pedagogical approach participants were exposed to, the use of English for instructional and social purposes, and teachers who were models or counter models.

5.1.2.1 Pedagogical approach during schooling

During their schooling, all the participants mostly had a staple diet of the audio-lingual approach and grammar translation. Drills figured prominently in their lessons, which were also characterised by translation and code-switching from English to French. With the exception of Sandy, all participants noted how closely their untrained pre-primary teacher modelled their teaching and the content of their lessons on primary level schooling. There was a stark discrepancy between their developmental level and the pedagogy adopted:

> "My teacher, Miss Lolo, was a retired Headmistress. There were no toys, no books and not even tables at school. We played outside in the yard and there was a bed on which we could sleep if we were tired. I remember that we sat on a bench and Miss Lolo made us recite numbers and alphabets in English and write these on our slate just as children are taught at primary school. She even taught standards I and II topics like multiplication and division!"
>
> <div align="right">(Extract from Preety's narrative, p. 89)</div>

While all participants were more frequently exposed to English in secondary school, teaching was textbook-based. There was little consideration for students who could not understand English and/or French, as Mala and Chantal experienced:

> "While it's true that we were more exposed to English at secondary level, I must say that there was not enough consideration on behalf of the teachers for those who could not understand. I was a very shy student and never dared tell the teachers that I had not understood. I realise that lack of teacher support is detrimental to language learning."
>
> <div align="right">(Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 119)</div>

All participants unanimously enjoyed lessons that were learner-centred, communicative and called for their involvement. These were valued as effective learning experiences:

"At Bright Kids, I had a great experience working with Gabby, my standards I and II teacher. She ... encouraged us to speak French. I clearly remember that she used to sing a lot in class ... The songs were a real motivation and I didn't want to miss a single day of school. Everyday Gabby taught us a new song and I sang it when I returned home."

<div align="right">(Extract from Jyotee's narrative, p. 100)</div>

5.1.2.2 Use of English

From the above, it becomes apparent that English was hardly ever presented to the participants as a means of communication. Rather it remained a subject to be learnt and assessed in. The fact that the teachers and learners shared common languages explains the ease and frequency with which they lapsed into translation:

"At school, we spoke Creole. No one spoke French or English. Even the teacher communicated with us in Creole; during English classes she explained in French or Creole then she wrote on the blackboard in English."

<div align="right">(Extract from Preety's narrative, p. 99)</div>

Such an approach did not favour language learning and it is therefore not surprising that, while some participants were able to develop a love for and an interest in English, others were alienated from it and, to date, struggle whilst using it. This is clearly illustrated by Mala's words:

"My lack of confidence has resulted in an innate fear that makes me apprehensive about what the teacher will say, the language he will use and the way he will talk to me. I can only communicate partly in English as I end up being lost for words. I like speaking English because it allows me to practice speaking the language but sometimes I'm not able to convey the message. I believe I do not have enough practice."

<div align="right">(Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 109)</div>

Her lack of linguistic capital clearly shows that certain instruments are not universally distributed which resulted in causing some learners to lag behind.

The participants who developed a keenness to learn English were those whose English teachers had made a difference. Sandy, who was in fact privileged enough to attend an English medium pre-primary school, was immersed in the language right from the start:

"I vividly recall that my teachers, Annie and Claudine, communicated only in English. We were only allowed to address the maids in French."

<div align="right">(Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 82)</div>

<div align="center">133</div>

Some of the teachers she encountered in the course of her primary and secondary schooling adopted approaches that appealed to her (for instance, the phonics approach and role play) and hence reinforced the parental push towards the language:

"[Rosalind] taught us phonics though games. She was a great person, a really loving teacher. Once we read 'The Little Red Hen' together and she acted it out. This was something we had never done before in all my years of schooling. I was enthralled!"

(Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 84)

Apart from Sandy, all participants appreciated the teachers who presented English as a means of communication and involved them in its use. Jyotee's attention was arrested by Miss Naina's mastery of the language. From that moment, Jyotee's relationship with the subject underwent a shift:

"The person who made me love English and really want to teach it was Miss Naina, my English and Literature teacher, who had come from England. I was very impressed, really very impressed, on the first day when she walked into the classroom and introduced herself in a British accent: 'Hello everybody!' Wow! The way she had said 'Hello' made me sit up. When she spoke, it looked like she was playing with the language. I was a very shy girl by nature. I usually sat at the back and hardly spoke. But I never missed Miss Naina's class. I used to learn all the quotations from 'Macbeth' by heart and I tried to speak like her. I watched the news just to try to pronounce words like her. Yes,...this is when I really started loving English."

(Extract from Jyotee's narrative, p. 102)

5.1.2.3 Teachers as models and counter models

As part of the schooling experiences of the participants, teachers came across as an important consideration in all the narratives. Irrespective of the subject they taught, the teachers' personality and attitude towards the learners had a great impact on the participants. As such, depending on individuals, teachers were considered as models and sources of inspiration or counter models.

A number of teacher-related factors determined how teachers were viewed. Physical attractiveness, friendliness, a caring attitude, and the adoption of learner-centred and participatory teaching strategies earned a favourable impression. With respect to teaching and learning English, teachers who were fluent in the language, who encouraged students to use it in the classroom and who implemented activities that provided opportunities for its use were particularly appreciated. We thus note that Preey has fond memories of Miss Simla, her standard two teacher, whose presence made school a pleasant place; Jyotee is still grateful to Gabby to whom she owes her fluency in French and Miss

Naina becomes the touchstone that establishes the standards of a good English teacher; and Sandy's zealous recollections of the yesteryears when she role played "The Little Red Hen" vividly bring out the pleasure she derived from it.

On the other hand, teachers earn negative appraisal when their teaching fails to inspire or involve learners, when they resort to corporal punishment and racial discrimination, and also when they do not show any consideration towards learners who do not understand what is being said. The degree to which participants were affected by the treatment meted out to them varies. Preety is now able to view teachers who had earlier terrified her stoically:

> "Maybe the bad teacher was better than the good one because he taught me something. When you have something positive it is good but we can also learn from negative experiences."

> (Extract from Preety's narrative, p. 90)

In opposition, years later, Sandy is unable to get over the detrimental effect of Regine's antagonistic stance on her. She is, in fact, resolved to be her foil:

> "I kept her in my sub- conscience as the type of teacher not to become. I really wish I could meet her one day. I'd tell her: 'You know what? You brought a change in my life. See where I am today! I'm the caring and democratic teacher you could never be!' I'm definitely closer to my students than she ever was."

> (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 83)

Chantal and Mala, on their part, have been brought to realise the importance of understanding and being understood when using language in the classroom:

> "I always tell the tutors who speak English and French most of the time that, to date, I believe there are students who cannot understand them; there are things we understand but others that we don't."

> (Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 110)

5.1.3 School as teaching context

In this category, the experiences of the participants as trainee teachers and teachers are examined in relation to the institutional climate which is determined by the administrative ethos, their relationship with colleagues, mentors (either officially designated or perceived), and learners.

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5.1.3.1 The institutional climate

The institutional climate results from the school policy, the relationship between management and staff and the dynamics among colleagues. Such institutional forces turn out to be a significant enabling or disabling factor.

Institutional policy regarding language use and curricular approach is a salient element that impacts upon a teacher's practice. The participants are seen ploughing ahead successfully (according to their own beliefs about teaching and learning) when the school policy is in line with their personal philosophy and when they have a supportive environment. The fact that Sandy shares the philosophy underlying the school policy enables her to equate work with fun:

> "To a great extent, I can be the teacher I am because Summerside gives me the freedom to adopt the principles I believe in. Show me a school −aside from this one− where the teacher can come to the same level as the kids!"
>
> (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 80)

Mala, who has experienced alienation due to language acting as a barrier to communication, fully espouses the Association's beliefs regarding the use of the first language. Her affinities with her learners enable her to translate advocated methods effectively and with conviction. Similarly, all the other participants enact their beliefs about teaching as they are not constrained by administrative forces. Jyotee can thus choose to adopt the French approach, which she deems to be more effective, instead of subscribing to the one officially advocated by the ECCEA.

The relationship among colleagues determines the atmosphere within which practitioners operate. Congenial relationships foster a sense of well-being and confidence, thereby creating space for professional growth. Preety gains in confidence and know-how thanks to her supportive colleagues:

> "Asha supplemented what Preety had acquired from Meera and enables her to become more versatile in her teaching. 'She showed me how to teach using resources like blocks and puzzles.'"
>
> (Extract from Preety's narrative, p. 94)

Mala and Jyotee share similar experiences. On the other hand, Sandy's case illustrates the way in which a negative climate can be destabilising and feed uncertainty:

"... at times, I feel as though I'm a misfit. My colleagues tend to snub me because of my French penchant because they interact in Creole."

<div align="right">(Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 87)</div>

The attitude of Sandy's colleagues towards her exacerbates her lack of confidence which, in turn, makes her doubtful about the soundness of her teaching strategies.

5.1.3.2 Mentors

Mentors, either officially designated or perceived, had a valuable contribution in the professional development of the participants. Mentors were experienced teachers who had spent a number of years in the field and were equipped with practical knowledge. Their advice and guidance, which were based on the practical aspects of teaching, were seen as being highly relevant in addressing field-related tensions. Terrified at instilling discipline at the risk of becoming another Rachel, Sandy was taught how to be firm with the children without alienating them by her official mentor. To date, Sandy seeks her advice in addition to that of her friend, Rosa, who has thirteen years of experience in the field:

"My mentor taught me to be firm with children. Earlier I would be scared to death to reprimand a child least I would be another Rachel in his life. Even now I run to her for advice. When I'm struggling with something, I also consult my colleague, Rosa, next door, who has eleven or thirteen years of experience at Summerside."

<div align="right">(Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 86)</div>

Preety encountered two senior teachers at crucial points in her teaching career. Meera, who set an inexperienced Preety on the track, comes to be viewed as "God". Asha led her to yet another level of growth by helping her assert herself when dealing with parents. Mala models her teaching on Mrs Sushilla, from whom she does not hesitate to learn covertly:

"I have always worked with Mrs Sushilla and have learnt a lot from her. I constantly observe her working with the children. When she tells them a story for instance, I lend an ear even if I am busy doing something else. I quickly jot down her strategies and, when I get back home, I write my notes neatly. In this manner I've learnt many things. I gradually developed professional competencies. I learnt that when you use a song or nursery rhyme, you move from concrete to abstract to help children learn."

<div align="right">(Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 114)</div>

Though Jyotee had no mentor, she benefitted from her colleague's know-how through peer training

sessions:

"Right now, I am learning from my colleague, Mrs Ducres, a French teacher who used to work at Le Lycée, a private French school. I'm trying to apply what I'm learning about the French system to English because I find this approach very effective as it involves lots of manipulation."

(Extract from Jyotee's narrative, p. 106)

Chantal's driving force remains the advice of her ex-director, Simone:

"She would give us books, worksheets, games and so on saying, 'Here are some tools but you must constantly look for something new. Go and seek new strategies! Be creative; do not repeat the same ones."

(Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 121)

5.1.3.3 Learners

The learners are the central consideration in all instructional decisions, be it with regard to the medium of communication or teaching strategies. When Mala states that "Every child is my child" and compares the pre-primary learner to a newborn babe who has just entered a new world, she brings out the essence of the participants' disposition. Though the aim of the participants is to teach English, the focus is on communication and on involving learners in the learning process. The learners' socio-linguistic profile thus explains language switches and the varying degree to which English is used by the different participants. Moreover, they all take pains to ensure that the teaching strategies cater for all the children and encourage participation. Both Chantal's notion of the teacher as performer and entertainer, and Sandy's belief that teaching must evolve converge towards Jyotee's philosophy that: "Teaching is all about knowing our learners."

It can also be noted that the participants harbour a democratic outlook in allowing their learners to determine what is to be taught and how it will be taught. Further, both Chantal and Jyotee acknowledge role reversals in their classrooms, since they learn English from the children whose first language is English:

"... one must always be open to new ways of teaching and keep on learning. That's the only way to improve. I even learn from my young pre-primary pupils; I acquire vocabulary from the native English speakers and I also take the children's suggestions in relation to the way I teach. If they want to play a game, I modify my teaching plan. It is wrong to think that children are merely learners and can teach us nothing. We must always bear in mind that we too can learn from them."

(Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 122)

5.1.4 Teacher education

All the participants enrolled on teacher education programmes at some point in their career. The majority deemed that teacher education programmes were too theoretical, thereby placing them at the interface between theory and practice. This was so even if, as in the case of Jyotee, she obtained valuable advice about making learners her central consideration:

> "Though I have learnt a lot from courses for professional development, at times, I feel the content is not really relevant to our professional needs. Teachers know what they need because they are the ones dealing with the children."
>
> (Extract from Jyotee's narrative, p. 106)

Jyotee's affirmation brings out the *situatedness* of learning, namely the way in which teachers develop practical knowledge and skills in the classroom.

Mala and Preety concede to certain advantages, such as being further exposed to English, which they valued for the development of their own proficiency. Nevertheless, Mala is of the view that approaches advocated uphold the second and third languages to the detriment of the mother tongue. As such these approaches do not resonate with the language needs of her learners:

> "Compelling children to speak English is not a good way to teach them. The children must express themselves in their mother tongue − be it Creole, English or French. When the children have just left home to join pre-school, they are like new born babies who have just entered a new world. It is crucial to avoid creating an abrupt disruption in their lives... [I]f we speak their mother tongue, the children are happy and blossom. They feel close to us and tell us whatever is on their mind. This is something they wouldn't have been able to do if they had to use another language. I know how it feels because this is what I had experienced as a child."
>
> (Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 111)

Preety, on the other hand, admits to some changes in her practice as she was able to overcome initial difficulties and implement some strategies that enhanced her teaching:

> "It was a bit difficult at the beginning because the children did not understand what I said but when I sang and did storytelling, they did understand a few words. Still I had to explain these in French...I now speak English more frequently in the classroom."
>
> (Extract from Preety's narrative, p. 95)

Sandy is yet again demarcated from the other participants by the nature of her experiences. During her stint in an Australian university, she was exposed, via her lecturers, to a teaching philosophy she espoused willingly. The central position of the individual – be s/he the teacher or the learner − in this philosophy made it appealing to her, especially as it reinforced previously- held notions of teaching:

> "All three shared their passion with us and urged us to be who we are. Their motto was: 'I have to be who I am. I can't be anybody else…'"
>
> (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 86)

What the participants valued as worthwhile experience during their course was placement in the field. Being in schools provided an anchorage within contextual realities and thereby allowed them to develop practical know-how. Preety learnt by carefully observing experienced teachers carrying out daily activities:

> "I observed how every morning they said prayers, sang the national anthem. I learnt how the teachers planned their work and controlled the children without shouting at them."
>
> (Extract from Preety's narrative, p . 92)

Sandy relished the sight of a democratic classroom, which came as a validation of her tacit conceptions of teaching that were counter to the dominant models in force during her schooling:

> "Once, when I was visiting a school in Australia, I saw the teacher lying on the floor playing the sick person and the children scurrying around like doctors...I was so happy because I realised I was on the right track."
>
> (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 86)

The analysis carried out so far reveals that the factors influencing the participants' language experiences did not act in isolation; rather two or more factors at times interacted with one another and exerted an influence on the participants. For example, notions about different languages that prevailed in the home were echoed in the school thereby shaping the participants' beliefs in a more powerful manner. The analysis further reveals that one source of influence can be analysed from different perspectives. For instance, the school is a significant site where the participants' experiences of both learning and teaching languages can be explored.

What also emerges from the analysis, is that two factors, namely 'foreign influences' and 'personality traits', cannot be examined separately from one or more of the other factors identified given the

manner in which they are interrelated. These factors, that 'cut across' (refer to Table 5 above) will be examined in the sub-sections that follow.

5.1.5 Foreign influences

A motif that pervades most of the narratives is the influence of foreign contact on the participants' perception of the English language and how it should be taught. Contact with foreign people or contexts have brought about new understandings which were welcomed by all participants concerned.

Sandy's experience of using English in Australia, Preety's pride in being able to converse in English with her relatives from England and Jyotee's admiration of Miss Naina's command of English depict the positive imaging of the English language from such encounters.

Foreign encounters also prompt new ways of conceiving of pedagogy. Sandy's notion of learner-centered instruction gained validation in Australia and her inspirational lecturers had a liberating influence on her as she strove to find her identity; Chantal discovered new teaching strategies on television programmes produced abroad and the benefits of the communicative approach while teaching Mrs Angela, a Japanese lady:

> "I became conscious that it's important to speak the target language − be it English or French− even with young ones. They grasp the meaning when verbal utterances are accompanied by gestures or mimes. This awareness came through my encounter with Mrs Angela, a Japanese lady, who wanted to learn French. I taught her the language by conversing with her. And so, in my classroom, I use role plays frequently in addition to games and songs."
>
> (Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 117)

Jyotee made the same discovery from her teachers who had lived abroad, namely Gabby and Miss Naina. Moreover, in her current workplace she was inspired by the effectiveness of the French approach which she promptly adopted. However, the most important foreign encounter for Jyotee strikes us as being the presence of Maiba in her class. Jyotee's strove to come up with an appropriate teaching approach to overcome the communication barrier between her and the child. The success that she encountered encouraged her to promote the use of English in her classroom:

> "I am convinced of my teaching philosophy because of my experience with Maiba, a child from Zimbabwe, five or six years ago. When she joined the school, she spoke very little English and it was very difficult to communicate. So I had to make gestures and demonstrate every word I said. When Maiba, left school about two years ago, she spoke French and English. She was even translating for the others. It was amazing,

simply a-ma-zing! ... I was so happy! When she left, I cried. ... Gradually, I started to use this method with the Mauritian children also."

<div align="right">(Extract from Jyotee's narrative, pp. 105-106)</div>

Mala lived the 'foreign' contact differently. To her, English remained an unfamiliar or foreign language, it's presence being diluted due to the predominance of French and Creole. As discussed earlier, her limited encounters with English have, in fact, driven her to value the use of the mother tongue in educating her learners:

"I always use songs, nursery rhymes and actions to teach...For every story, I use a song that is thematically relevant. For instance, if I'm working on '*Pekoy al lapes'* [92], we sing the French song: *'Pour nager dans l'eau'*[93] and the Creole song: *'li naze dan dilo'* [94]. When reference is made to corals, I show the children a real one. We also mime while singing because actions facilitate understanding. Once the children have learnt the vocabulary and grasped the concept, they are eager to participate when we recite and mime the English nursery rhyme. You see, if I had spoken English or French, they would not have responded in the same way. Teaching would have been more difficult."

<div align="right">(Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 113)</div>

Foreignness thus acquires nuanced meanings when defined in the light of the participants' biography. It appears as an external, contextual factor as well as an internal or mental disposition towards the English language. In both instances, however, the impact is significant on the teachers' experiences and, consequently, their representations of the language.

5.1.6 Personality traits

So far, the influences of extrinsic forces in shaping the teacher selves have been discussed. It can nevertheless be noted that their personality is yet another noteworthy factor that charts their growth. Far from being passive puppets in the hands of fate, the participants are seen to script their biography by displaying grit and determination, and taking decisions at some point of their journey towards becoming better language learners and good teachers.

Chantal's narrative is an apt illustration of how individuals manage to overcome hurdles – here represented by parental opposition to her career choice and a lack of financial resources – through sheer willpower:

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[92] Creole utterance which means "Pekoy goes fishing"
[93] French utterance which means "To swim in water".
[94] Creole utterance which means "He swims in water".

"I fought against my parents to embrace a teaching career. I lived on a sugar estate in the south of the island and would wake up at five in the morning to go to work. Everyday, I would leave the house in tears, withstanding my parents' berating. I stood against many other difficulties. While following my course in Early Childhood Education in Reunion Island, I had to interrupt my studies for a year and take up a job in order to pay the university fees."

(Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 120)

Preety, despite being initially overwhelmed by her lack of knowledge of the field and being considered as a helper, was resolute in developing her teaching skills. Jyotee made her way single-mindedly from one school to another, overcoming the challenges each setting brought. Mala viewed her entry into the teaching field as a fresh start to her life. She simultaneously took on developing teaching skills and improving her own proficiency in English:

"Becoming a teacher represents more than taking up a new job; it signifies a new page of my life. My entry into this profession coincides with a painful period– my divorce. I forgot my personal problems by focusing on my career. Now, I am determined to become better in English. I read English books avidly and, as from this year, have started speaking English at home with my children..."

(Extract from Mala's narrative, pp. 114-115)

Sandy became a better learner of English on returning from Australia; for the first time, she admitted to working hard to score good grades for the love of the subject rather than to impress the teacher. On the other hand, her identity crisis re-emerges in the form of her inability to vouchsafe for her teaching approach despite her deep conviction of its soundness:

"There are times when I plunge into uncertainty. Though I know for a fact that I am here for the children, I feel that my trial and error approach is like using my kids as guinea pigs: Too bad it didn't work this time; we'll see with the next batch... Am I on the right track? ... I suppose I'm caught in an existential dilemma, trying to figure out who I am and constantly riding waves of certainty and doubt. It's not only because of my colleagues. I'm generally considered as being... a specimen − even at home: Cuckoo-head, Goofy, Loony Toon..."

(Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 87)

The development of Sandy's identity as a teacher appears to be intricately enmeshed with the development of her personal identity and her uncertainties in one sphere spill into the other.

Section 2: Enmeshed influences in the making of teachers' selves

The cross-comparisons of the narratives and thematic analysis allowed me to dig deeper into the

teachers' lives and unpack layers of their experiences. Emerging insights into the development of their teacher selves and pedagogical notions are formulated below.

5.2.1 Multiplicity of biographical influences

The development of teachers' professional identity cannot be pinned down to a single factor. Rather, I observe that a range of biographical experiences, which spread across time and space, determined the ways in which they experienced the English language − for instance as a language of communication, a language loaded with culture, a foreign language and a social asset. These experiences were central to their developing and evolving conceptions of what the English language represented and how it should be taught. Numerous intrinsic and extrinsic factors (parents, teachers, learners, personality, etc.) impacted upon the teachers in a range of sites (home, school, teacher training institutions, foreign countries, etc.), shaping the type of teachers they have eventually become. Influences from various quarters converged towards the teachers singularly or in conjunction with other forces. The influence of these factors could be overt in some instances or quite subtle and covert in others.

5.2.2 Blurred boundaries in the teaching of languages

The initial findings further reveal that, when dealing with language pedagogy in a multi-lingual context, it is not possible to consider languages in isolation. The storied lives of the participants have shown that the use and teaching of English were intricately linked with the use and teaching of other languages. For instance, the presence or absence of English in one's home became a powerful indicator of how far one became inclined to learning it, in comparison to one's stance towards other languages in the environment. This eventually determined how it was presented to the learners, that is, how it was used and taught in the classroom. Early informal experiences of languages in a multi-lingual context thus significantly shaped the individuals' predisposition towards languages and their teaching.

5.2.3 Porous frontiers between contexts

Further, the findings point to the fact that teachers were not shaped solely in the classroom or during training stints. Multiple experiences in a diversity of locations contributed to the development of their teaching philosophy and the image of the ideal teacher that they embodied. As such, the home exerted as powerful an influence as the school and, at times, a more powerful influence than teacher education programmes, while the local context played as significant a role as foreign contexts. In fact, the

narratives have revealed how early notions of language that were established in the participants' home, were eventually reinforced in the face of eventual language experiences, especially those situated in the period of their schooling. The home thus had a significant role in establishing the teachers' conceptions of English in a way that made them particularly sensitive to cognate 'messages'. This evidences the fact that porous boundaries separate personal and professional selves, formal and informal spaces, as well as local and foreign contexts allowing these influences to mutually impact upon one another.

5.2.4 Individualised pathways for teacher development

However, while the teachers' biographies appear to bear significant similarities, nuances that surface from their lived experiences are quite revealing. Teacher development cannot be normatised given the diversity of influences and the particular manner in which these impact upon different individuals. Thus, the particular combination and permutation of forces culminates into a specific developmental trajectory for each teacher. Nevertheless, it also emerges that teachers are engaged in a two-way interaction with these factors. Whilst they are geared by a diversity of contextual influences, they are capable of exerting their agentic potential in acting back or reacting to these. Teachers take conscious decisions as they negotiate external forces and make assertive moves in relation to how they should teach.

5.2.5 Teachers as knowers of their professional context

Teacher agency with respect to the contextual adaptation of their teaching is also a striking feature in the storied narratives. Teachers are not merely tossed about to the whims and caprices of various factors. They, in fact, exert their authority as *knowers* of their professional context to carve their pedagogy. For instance, we can observe how official dictums regarding the teaching of English are bent to accommodate the use of the teachers' and learners' preferred language(s). Indeed, the degree to which English is used and the way in which it is presented in the classroom depends not only on the languages to which the teachers themselves are predisposed, but also on the linguistic propensity of their learners. For the teachers, the communicative function of language in enabling interaction between them and their learners is a primordial consideration. In some instances, it even supersedes the need to use English, the imposed or advocated medium of instruction. The teachers' firm decisive moves with respect to language choices in their multi-lingual context project them as convinced theoreticians of their pedagogical practices. This can be juxtaposed with the imaging of teachers as deficient.

5.2.6 Subjectivities and limitations in pedagogical decisions

In direct contrast with the above, I note that the manner in which teachers negotiate the various influences and interpret their language experiences is imbued with their subjectivity. The teachers rely mostly on their personal experiences of learning and teaching and of their perceived knowledge of their learners to make pedagogical decisions. The centrality of the learners in the decision-making process originates from their own harsher and, at times supportive biographic experiences of learning and teaching language in their home/schools/communities. Arguably, they seek to protect their learners from the grim side of schooling that they had encountered and wish to establish a safe environment in their classroom. The fact that they are working with young learners is also a crucial consideration, care being a prominent feature of pedagogy for children. However, when teachers project their selves onto their learners, they run the risk of pathologising them and hence restraining rather than opening up opportunities to learn the target language. In failing to maintain a critical distance between their experiences and their learners, teachers fall into the trap of exercising the tyranny of care since being too caring may be at the detriment of the intellect (Amin, 2011). The drawbacks of teachers' knowings thereby become evident.

Further, it is ironical that the teachers are averse to adopting theories advocated by teacher education or regulating bodies, arguing that these are not always relevant to their learners, and yet adopt the same theories (such as communicative language teaching) when these emanate from their experiences. While this points to the weight of personal experiences, it is also indicative of the dangers of adopting too narrow an outlook. Over-reliance on what they have lived in order to construct their practice and lack of adequate consideration to theories may lead to losing out on possibilities to further enhance their pedagogy especially as experiences may be limited and constraining. The need for teachers to be more reflexive in relation to their biographic understandings becomes a significant issue.

Chapter summary

The current chapter outlined the way in which the themes identified in the narratives were categorised as a means of refining the data. An analysis of these themes through a comparative approach ensued. This further shed light on the range of factors that shaped teachers and on the nature of their influence. Initial findings drawn from this level of analysis revealed that biographical experiences were key to the development of the teachers' professional selves. However, the different factors identified did not act in isolation. Rather, they interacted with one another and impacted on the teachers in different ways.

Moreover, teacher learning and development were seen to take place in various contextual spaces − formal, informal, local and foreign – and the teachers' conceptions of English were strongly determined by the way in which they were socialised into language use and taught the language. It stems that, in conceiving of language teaching in a multi-lingual context, the need to establish a channel to communicate with learners impacts strongly on the pedagogical decisions which teachers take. Based on their knowledge of their context and learners, teachers decide when to introduce English and how to grade instruction. They use the target language with the support of the mother tongue, gestures, concrete objects, songs, stories etc to varying degrees, depending on the learners' knowledge of that language. However, the notion of teachers' knowings is also problematised in this section. The analysis alerts us to possible limitations in the way teachers construct their practice since over-reliance on the self intensifies subjectivities. Teachers, who do not adopt a critical stance towards their experiences but instead mirror these indiscriminately onto their learners', may fail to provide the latter with ample opportunities for language development.

The cross-case comparisons was a revealing exercise. The process of unfurling the multi-layered phenomenon, afforded me with a better insight into the topic being examined. The chapter that follows proposes to dig still further into these findings by focusing more closely on three antithetical cases. I believe that studying the phenomenon from multiple perspectives will allow me to probe into it more deeply and enlighten me further about the link between teachers' biographical experiences of learning language and their pedagogical practices.

Chapter 6

Going off the beaten track: considering the 'un-typical'

Introduction

> *Glory be to God for dappled things—*
> *For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;*
> *For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;*
> *Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;*
> *Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;*
> *And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.*
> *All things counter, original, spare, strange;*
> *Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)*
> *With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;*
> *He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise Him.*
> *("Pied Beauty" by G.M. Hopkins, 1877)*

Hopkins's poem "Pied Beauty" is a recognition and celebration of diversity and multiplicity ─ features that enhance the beauty of our world. Far from speculating on separatedness or differences, "Pied Beauty" signifies diversity within a single context.

In the previous chapter, I had engaged in a deep analysis of the themes emerging from the narratives through a cross-comparative approach. While the analysis had drawn attention to a number of similarities in the teachers' experiences of becoming, it had also uncovered diverging elements in the way and the extent to which various factors had influenced this process. It had also had drawn attention to the blurred boundaries that separated contexts and the way in which diverse factors were involved in an inter-relational flow, with influences from different contexts acting upon and interacting with one another. Teacher agency was a common feature in all the participants' biography and contributed to making each journey unique. These elements will now be focused on with respect to three participants who are termed 'un-typical' – that is 'diverging from the norm'─ and which, I believe, are worth closer scrutiny since my aim is to come to grips with the multiplicity of pathways leading to teacher development. In my view, this shift of perspective stands as an essential test case for the

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findings that emerged from the previous level of analysis and an important validation check.

Orientation to this chapter

Section 1 defines the term 'un-typical' and explains the need to consider an alternative perspective. Section 2 goes on to justify the choice of participants who are designated as 'un-typical', highlighting what makes them stand apart from the others. In each case, a defining feature is used as the basis for selection. Section 3 engages in a thorough analysis of each case, further discussing the notion of blurred boundaries that stemmed from the second level of analysis. Section 4 sums up the insights obtained from the current level of analysis, and compares these with the previous findings. It also provides answers to the first and second critical questions.

Section 1: Why go off the beaten track?

Focusing on the typical, as discussed in Chapter 3, prompts one to work towards generalisations and norms. Such an ontological stance jars with the findings of my study that have clearly brought out that teachers' experiences and knowledge development cannot be typified. While the pathways of the lives of teachers studied have led to the classroom, the routes have remained specific to the individual and the encounters unique. Each participant has lived her experiences differently in line with the macro and micro contexts in which she grew and this accounted for her uniqueness as a teacher. Though it may be easier to study and draw conclusions from likes, findings thereby obtained are thwarted because, in failing to recognise multiplicity, they do not represent the 'pied' (multiple) reality. The 'un-typical' here represents those teachers who stand out from the rest by the nature of their profile and experiences, but are very much part and parcel of those we classify as teachers. Going off the beaten track and looking at those who are positioned otherwise is then more sound ─ epistemologically─ as it leads to a more realistic understanding of teacher development. It is my belief that taking the road less travelled by will make all the difference.

The three teachers who represent the un-typical are Sandy, Mala and Chantal. The section below will justify the choice of these three teachers and will then proceed to illustrate how these cases deepen our understanding of teachers' *becoming*.

Section 2: Highlighting separatedness while belonging

The choice of Sandy, Mala and Chantal as participants in my study, as discussed in Chapter 3, in itself attests for their eligibility in the category known as pre-primary teachers. And yet, a deep analysis of their life story prompts me to 're present' them as being separate or different while belonging. What demarcates them from the rest? In each of these three cases, the aspect that strongly stood out as being THE defining feature of the participant concerned, and that pitted her against the other participants, became the key consideration that guided the selection.

(i) Sandy:

Sandy, by the very fact of her privileged socio-economic status and the types of experiences (language choices in the home, schooling, tertiary education and foreign stints) this afforded her, stands out from the rest of the participants who are from the working or middle class. Sandy's story gives us a glimpse of teacher development taking place beyond the known contextual (social, economic and local) boundaries and how such experiences impact on one's understanding of language and its pedagogy. Sandy brings in the international dimension in the study and her story propels us to consider the risks of physical insularity on pedagogical practices. While in Chapter 2, the problematic of adhering to an 'outside-in' model for policy development had been critiqued, Sandy's case points to the risks of adopting a purely 'inward gaze'.

(ii) Mala:

How can one who is neither proficient in English nor confident expressing herself in that language teach it? Mala's life experiences, from a home where English was 'absent' to being a factory worker where the irrelevance of English was even more resonant, led to the adoption of pedagogical practices tinged with sensitivity and a particular philosophy on language use and teaching in the classroom. Her story, thus, is one that illustrates how alternative daily linguistic realities impact on classroom pedagogy in a multi-lingual context. It allows us to understand how these considerations can be powerful enough to counter official dictates regarding language teaching. At the same time, Mala, who is rooted in the local context, stands as an interesting foil to Sandy who comes with international exposure.

(iii) Chantal:

Chantal, whose pedagogical brand was derived from both informal and formal personal experiences and multi-levelled teaching, broadens the scope of the study to the permeable boundaries between teacher knowledge development in formal and informal contexts and the development of teaching practices.

Her story provides an alternate view to teacher education in that it demonstrates how pedagogical insight can emanate from unpredictable sources that are not necessarily formal or subject- specific. Chantal is the only participant who has taught at different levels of schooling and displays a strong awareness of education beyond early childhood.

The storied narratives of Sandy, Mala and Chantal that engender sets of opposite binaries, can be used to illustrate the blurred boundaries at various levels: formal/informal contexts; personal/professional experiences; socio-economic status and language use/pedagogical practices; teaching of English/ teaching of other languages; local/international contexts; learner/teacher etc. Since the possibilities are numerous and these have already been discussed in the previous chapter, I here engage in an in-depth analysis of one aspect for each of the three participants. This is as follows:

- Sandy: local/foreign boundaries
- Mala: language use/pedagogical boundaries
- Chantal: multi-levelled teaching/pedagogical boundaries

Section 3: Fuzzy boundaries

6.3.1 Sandy

6.3.1.1 Local/foreign boundaries

Sandy's journey to becoming a teacher was shaped by the plethora of forces brought out by the literature on teacher identity and teacher knowledge development. Sandy's personal, social and professional experiences continuously impacted on her conceptions of the English language and its pedagogy. However, Sandy's story brings out that there are certain very powerful forces at work as from the time of birth and that are frequently marginalised in the literature. Sandy's teacher education began in her home, amidst her family where her predisposition towards different languages took shape.

Her parents determined the languages she would talk and the importance of those languages. Sandy's privileged socio-economic background explains the push towards English and French, the choice of private schools which reinforced her linguistic habits, and her trips to Australia where she learnt to appreciate the cultural and communicative dimensions of the English language.

Sandy's upbringing by liberal parents led her to value the democratic teachers she encountered during her schooling and who created opportunities for the students' active involvement in language learning. Her appreciation of participatory approaches was reinforced by her Australian experience where she encountered lecturers and teachers who promoted a similar ethos. Sandy stands apart from the other participants in her appreciation of teacher education programmes. While they viewed teacher training as being too theoretical, Sandy found her encounter with teacher educators and visits to schools uplifting.

How does Sandy reconcile all these influences within her teaching approach? An examination of Sandy's pedagogical practices reveals that they embody the diversity of experiences she has embraced in different contexts. As a teacher, Sandy:

- Strives to create opportunities for her students to participate fully in the activities carried out; she even offers her learners the possibility of shaping the lessons;

- Upholds the communicative function of English by herself communicating predominantly in English with her students;

- Recognises the need to involve all learners and thus scaffolds the learning of English by shifting gradually and incrementally to its use and also by acknowledging and using the students' mother tongue ─ even if this implies bending the school 'all English' policy and fighting her own prejudice against Creole.

Sandy's experiences which clearly depict the cross influences between national and international borders, also foster the global/local debate by drawing attention to the way in which insularity restricts the horizon and, hence, the outlook of teachers practicing in small island contexts.

6.3.1.2 Agency in Sandy

Sandy strikes us as being the least confident and the most wavering teacher among the participants ─ despite having benefitted from tertiary education in an Australian university. Sandy's lack of confidence can also be traced back to the blurred boundaries between the personal and the professional selves. It is the culmination of:

- Being the third in a family of five children and not knowing exactly where she stood: "As the third born in a family of five children, I was never too sure where I stood and this is what perhaps led to my identity crisis." (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 84);

- Having been the target of her teacher, Rachel's, vehemence which sapped her confidence: "I recall an incident when Rachel called me to the blackboard to work out a maths sum. **I was terrified.** I was never a confident person but around that time, I really started losing my confidence. I used to love going to school but I began to dislike school." (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 83);

- Being seen as an outsider by her colleagues due to her social background: "And yet, at times, I feel as though I'm a misfit. My colleagues tend to snub me because of my French penchant because they interact in Creole." (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 87).

However, Sandy asserts herself and fights back by ensuring that her learners are confident being themselves: "I want my learners, above all, to be confident **belonging, being and becoming;** they should be capable of taking ownership of their learning journey ─ that's crucial for me. I cannot impose my beliefs on them. " (Extract from Sandy's narrative, p. 78)

Sandy's experiences which underscore the inter-relational flow between biographical experiences and pedagogical practices are summed up in the diagram below:
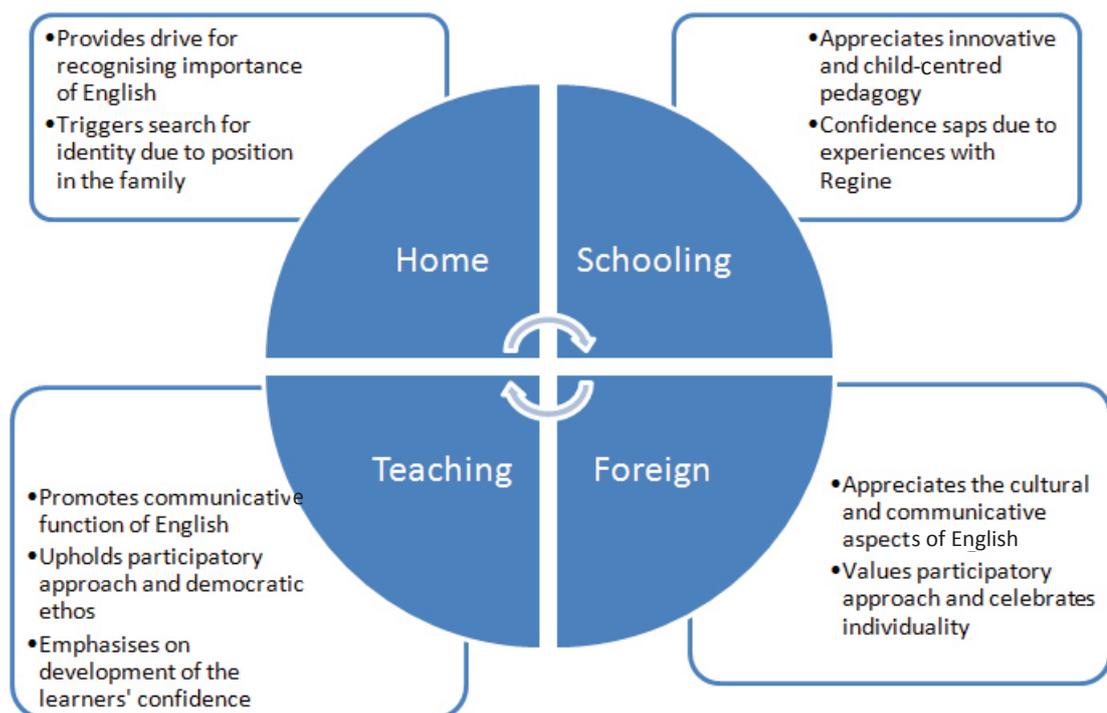
Figure 9: Inter-relational flow between Sandy's biographical experiences and pedagogical practices

6.3.2 Mala

6.3.2.1 Language use/pedagogical boundaries

Language proficiency is an important consideration for a language teacher as proficiency informs one's perception of self-efficacy. The demands on the language teacher operating in a multi-lingual classroom are high since the teacher has to develop the learners' literacy in several languages as well as use language to manage the teaching/learning process. The language teacher is thus expected to be *'multi-lingually proficient'*, that is she should demonstrate fluency in the multiplicity of languages used by the learners and that are part and parcel of the language environment. And what if one is not?

Mala's upbringing took place in a home where the need to speak English or French was not felt, the language having no relevance in her immediate environment. Due to her lack of proficiency, Mala felt isolated in the classroom: neither could she understand nor communicate in these languages. Moreover, the teacher-centred approaches that had prevailed during her schooling and pushed students to passive roles, reinforced her position as an outsider. Post schooling experiences, namely Mala's spell as a factory worker, drew her further away from the academic and social worlds where she could have encountered English. Her already loose links with the language were thus severed. As a teacher, Mala had to face face broader considerations with respect to the country's socio-economic reality, the educational system and the policy drive to educate children in English. She thus renewed her relationship with English on a different note, recognising the need to be equipped and equip her learners with the English language.

Mala's biographical experiences feed into her pedagogical practices as follows:

- Her experiences prompt her to understand the consequences of segregation and the need to establish a sense of belonging in the classroom;

- Mala's choice of the mother tongue as medium of instruction is not merely the result of her professional context, that is the school policy which upholds the use of the mother tongue, but mostly her affinity with her learners. Her ability to identify with them and the felt need to cater for their needs is a consequence of her harsher experiences of language learning in a multi-lingual set-up;

- Mala's definition of pedagogy is predominantly based on the child's emotions (pedagogy based on affective considerations) rather than what she would consider to be cold theory or policy. She is sensitive to her pupils' need to understand and be understood in order to feel that they belong to this new world of schooling.

6.3.2.2 Agency in Mala

• Mala upholds the use of the mother tongue as a means to establish and maintain communication with her young learners. That, she believes, is a prime consideration at this stage despite her awareness that the children must be prepared for the next level of schooling. Mala reasons out that schooling does not merely entail dishing out a programme, but rather taking into consideration the children's profile (age, social background, mother tongue, etc.) and teaching them in a manner that is meaningful to them. The learner here becomes an ECE issue: "Compelling children to speak English is not a good way to teach them. The children must express themselves in their mother tongue ─ be it Creole, English or French. When the children have just left home to join pre-primary school, they are like new born babies who have just entered a new world. It is crucial to avoid creating an abrupt disruption in their lives. Teaching children demands a different approach. If we teach the children another language at this point, it becomes too difficult for them to learn it. But if we speak their mother tongue, the children are happy and blossom. They feel close to us and tell us whatever is on their mind. This is something they wouldn't have been able to do if they had to use another language." (Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 111);

• Mala's entry into the field of teaching marked a new page of her life. Walking away from a divorce, Mala is determined to make her teaching career the pinnacle of her life: "My entry into this profession coincided with a painful period ─ my divorce. I forgot my personal problems by focusing on my career…Like a bird, I wish to constantly soar to new heights" (Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 115);

• Conscious of the importance of being fluent in English, Mala undertakes to improve her own proficiency and that of her children in the language: "Now, I am determined to become better in English. I read English books avidly and, as from this year, have started speaking English at home with my children, because it is important for them too to be fluent in this language." (Extract from Mala's narrative, p. 115). She also prepares her lessons diligently so that she is better equipped to conduct her classes. Though her pedagogy adheres essentially to affective considerations it does not obliterate academic goals.

The inter-relational flow between biographical experiences and pedagogical practices in Mala's case is summed up in the diagram below:
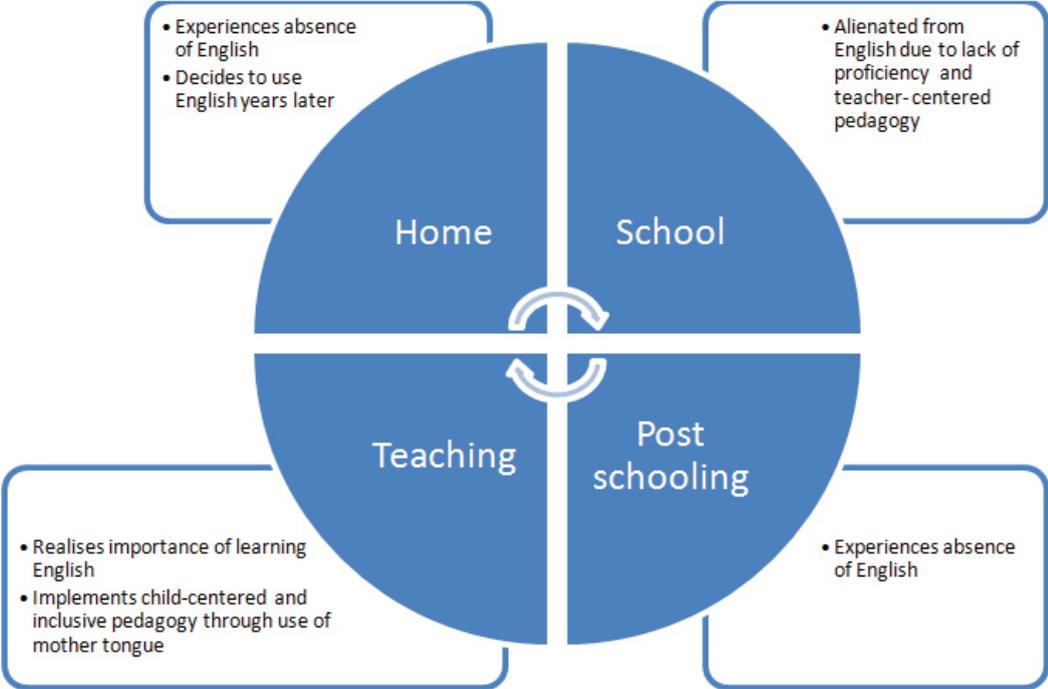
Figure 10: Inter-relational flow between Mala's biographical experiences and pedagogical practices

6.3.3 Chantal

6.3.3.1 Multi-levelled teaching/pedagogical boundaries

What is striking in Chantal's narrative is her multi-levelled experience and her ability to make links between her teaching experiences at those different levels. Like all other participants, a number of biographical factors impinged upon her teaching philosophy. Growing up in a French-speaking home, Chantal had the opportunity to learn English at school. By juxtaposing learning experiences at primary and secondary school, she was able to weigh the effectiveness of various teaching approaches. At primary school, she prized the individual attention the teachers gave students, the fact that her standard V teacher always spoke English and her involvement in group work. Thus, despite the traditional teaching approach that prevailed, her primary schooling was characterised by positive learning experiences. On the other hand, secondary school memories are predominantly related to teachers who translated from English to French extensively and showed little consideration for students who were as shy as she was.

Starting her career as a teacher of French, Chantal moved on to being a teacher of English. Two powerful influences on Chantal's teaching were her mother and her school director. By accompanying her mother to Catechism classes, young Chantal gained her initial insight into the effectiveness of using child-friendly activities. On becoming a teacher, it was her director who pushed her towards new awareness by urging her to constantly innovate and renew her teaching. Chantal remained abreast of new pedagogical trends and appreciated the value of extensive reading through her involvement in the education of her own children. One of the highlights of her development as a teacher stands as being her involvement in teaching French to an adult learner, Mrs Angela. This is when she stumbled upon the merits of the communicative approach. If she is able to transfer and apply the knowledge obtained through teaching Mrs Angela to her young learners, she is also able to use insights obtained at pre-primary level while coaching children at primary level. Similarly, working with the latter has equipped her with the skills to prepare her pre-primary learners for subsequent schooling. Multi-levelled experience and living in a multi-lingual context further prompts Chantal to value her own learners as teachers and she openly acknowledges that she also learns from them.

The drives from the diversity of her biographical experiences transpire in Chantal's teaching as seen below:

- Chantal's teaching ethos is grounded in her mother's teaching and her director's advice; being a pre-primary teacher entails being an entertainer and an actor because this is the way to grab the children's attention and trigger their interest. Learner participation is thus a central feature of her pedagogy;

- True to the philosophy of the communicative language teaching approach, Chantal is of the view that teaching a language entails placing learners in meaningful situations to make them active users of the language;

- Chantal draws from her multi-levelled as well as formal and informal experiences and harbours a holistic view of education. Considering pedagogy from a broader perspective, Chantal is in a position to mix and match approaches according to the needs of her learners rather than use age as the only determining criterion;

- Learner-centredness was not introduced to Chantal as a mere theory but rather as a lived reality ─ something she derived from her biographical experiences. It is therefore easy to understand Chantal's firm conviction that pedagogy should be tailored according to the level, needs and interests of children.

6.3.3.2 Agency in Chantal

- Chantal's theories emanated from her practice. Her drive to constantly remain updated and search for innovative strategies did not merely result from successful formal and informal experiences. It was also due to the conscious search for new ways of teaching and of remaining updated about pedagogical innovations. To constantly innovate became her motto and her impetus to always be on the look-out for new teaching strategies: "I have realised that innovation is the key to growth and becoming a good teacher." (Extract from Chantal's narrative, p. 121).

- If Chantal's learning/developmental curve moved from practice to theory, it was due to her ability to reflect upon her practice. Chantal's cross-levelled experience influenced her outlook on the type of education that should be meted out to young children. Despite being a pre-primary teacher, Chantal never lost sight of the broader system within which she operated: "Interestingly, my connection with these people has triggered an awareness of the cross–influences between the different levels. If working with older children allows me to better prepare my own pupils for forthcoming schooling, my experience in teaching at pre-primary level enables me to better support older students who improve considerably." (Extract from Chantal's narrative, pp. 122).

The inter-relational flow between biographical experiences and pedagogical practices that are also apparent in Chantal's experiences are summed up in the diagram below:
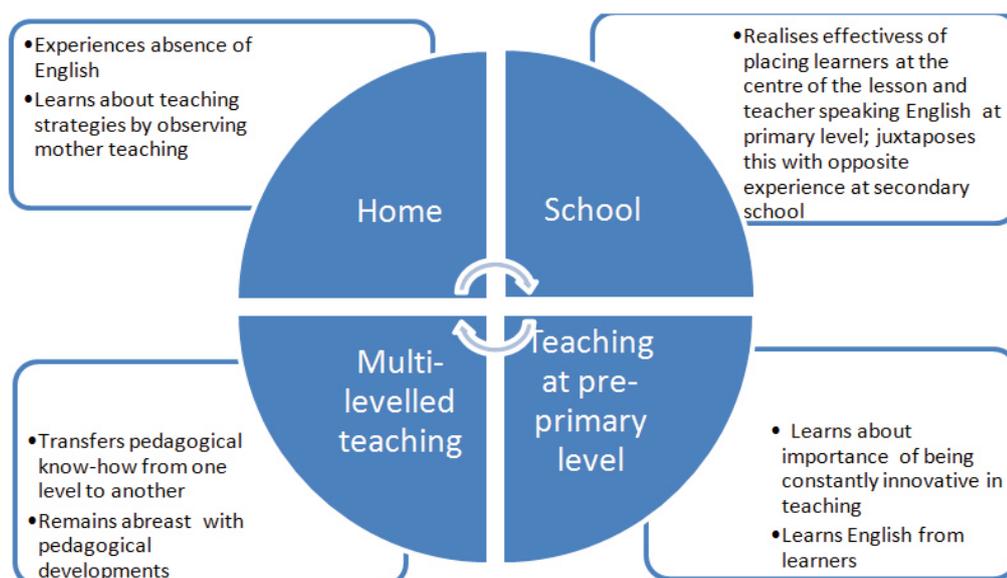
Figure 11: Inter-relational flow between Chantal's biographical experiences and pedagogical practices

Section 4: Intersecting forces at the crux of teacher professional development

This study of the un-typical participants was carried out as a form of analytical validity check whereby the relevance of the emerging thesis was disrupted by a deliberate choice of counter point cases. The analysis of these cases has further reinforced the understanding that came out of the initial levels of analysis, namely that teachers' conceptions of language and teaching are influenced by biographical factors that operate at different levels: personal, professional, formal, informal, local and foreign. Perceptions of language are shaped in the home where language use is defined by the family, socio-economic background and ethnicity. These notions crystallise in the later years in the course of further encounters with the language and the ripples of these experiences can be detected in the pedagogical approach eventually adopted by the teachers. The forces from the micro and macro contexts interact to define the type and nature of teachers' experiences of language and pedagogy. The study of these cases has therefore reinforced the understanding that teacher knowledge development cannot be compartmentalised, as insights from a plethora of experiences are drawn upon to gear one's professional practice.

Further, the analysis has confirmed the inter-relational flow between different spheres of biographical influences and emphasised the permeable nature of the borders separating these spheres. The process of mapping out the salient experiences of Sandy, Mala and Chantal in different biographical spaces (see Figures 9, 10, 11) and highlighting the nature of their influences on the participants' pedagogy has clearly revealed that understandings derived from one context are not wiped out as teachers move on. The blurred or porous boundaries separating these contexts allow for a fluid movement of influences across sites so much so that the teachers' pedagogical practices are located at the intersection of a number of competing/complementary forces as indicated in the diagram below:
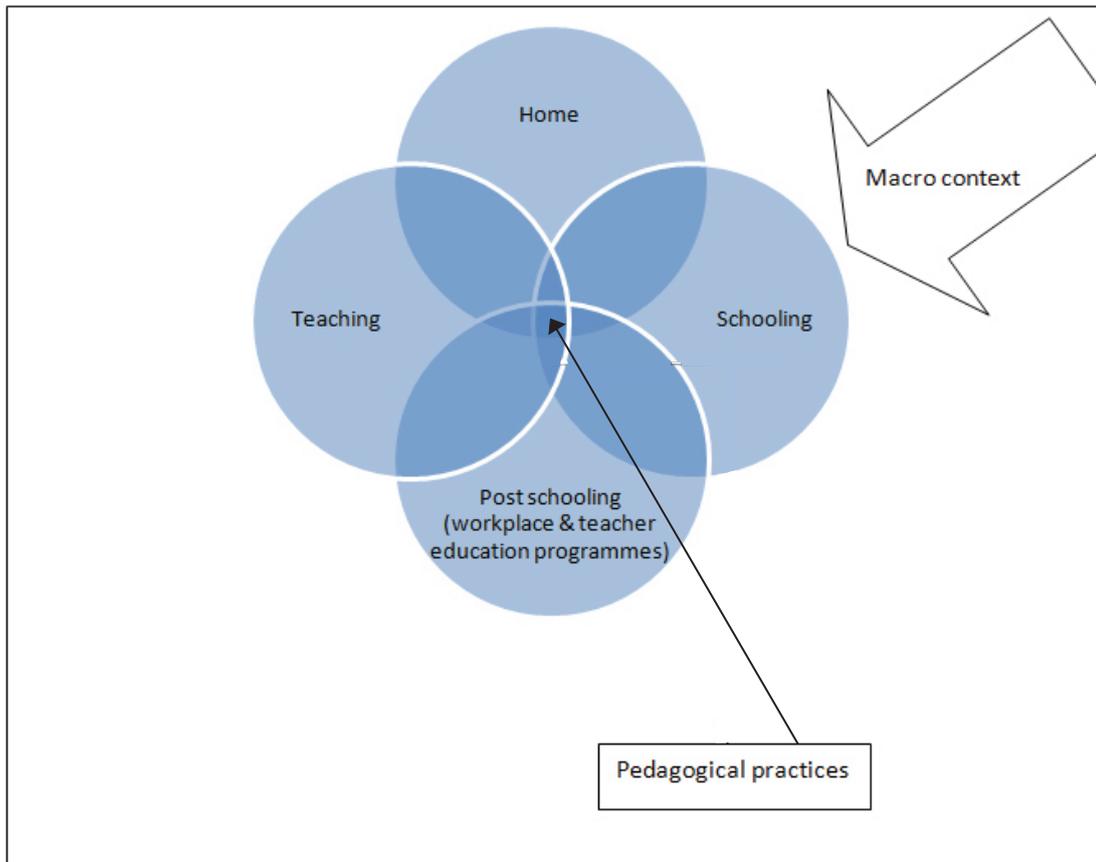
Figure 12: Pedagogical practices at the crux of enmeshed influences

The fact that pedagogical practices develop at the crux of enmeshed influences from diverse biographical spaces explains why the impact of early experiences in the home can still be felt on teachers years later: Chantal still adheres by her mother's teaching philosophy, Sandy staunchly upholds the communicative function of English in her teaching and Mala is bent upon being inclusive in her approach and uses the students' mother tongue so that they are not distanced.

The analysis has also underlined a significant aspect of teachers' professional development. It revealed that when teachers adopt a reflexive stance, dare to push beyond their experiences and modify their pedagogical philosophies, they capitalise on opportunities to enhance practice. This can be juxtaposed with the potential limitations of constraining themselves to their experiences. A brief comparison of Chantal and Mala makes this explicit. It can be noted that their experiences of English and philosophy are quite similar:

- Both are marked by the absence of English in their home;

- They feel marginalised at school due to their limited comprehension of English and shyness;

- As adults, they prefer to express themselves in their first language (French or Creole) rather than English,

- Both believe that the role of pre-primary school is to teach vocabulary and establish the basis for further learning of the English language which will take place at primary school.

Nevertheless, Chantal's classroom is a space where the use of English is prominent and she provides students with opportunities to use the language actively through the adoption of strategies such as role play. On the other hand, the degree to which English is used is much less consequential in Mala's classroom and it is marked by recurrent code-switching and translation. Taking the case of Sandy, to further illustrate how teaching also entails rising beyond personal prejudices, it is seen that she makes a conscious effort to use Creole in the classroom though she would have preferred not to. This is not to say that the bias against Creole that she developed in her home has worn off but, rather, that the impact has weakened and is less weighty as compared to her urge to value her learners and to raise their self-confidence and self-esteem. This is itself a direct consequence of her experiences at the hands of her teacher, Rachel. If, in all three cases, the motivation underlying the decisions remains 'child-centric', its translation into pedagogical approaches varies.

Studying the un-typical cases has thus been an edifying exercise which has helped to further highlight the factors that shape teachers and their teaching of English in a multi-lingual environment. The data analysis carried out so far, namely the narrative analysis, cross-case comparisons and examination of counter point cases, bring answers to the first two critical questions:

1. **What are teachers' biographical experiences of learning English?**

With respect to question1, the study has revealed that there exists a plethora of formal and informal, as well as personal and professional biographical experiences of learning English. These are anchored in diverse sites, such as the home, the school and teacher education programmes; as well as in local and foreign contexts. The different sites and situations in which the participants encountered and used the English language ─ be it for learning or teaching purposes ─ in conjunction with the other languages present in their multi-lingual environment determined the type and nature of these experiences. English

was generally viewed as a language with cultural, social and economic capital unless the participants had the opportunity to experience it as a medium of communication or to appreciate it as a language with cultural affiliations. To those who did not have such opportunities, English remained a foreign language even if its value was recognised and there was a conscious attempt to master it. However, the interplay of influences from various fronts led me to conclude that experiences cannot be essentialised due to the subjective nature of the participants' experiences and the manner in which they negotiate and understand these. Given the enmeshed nature of influences that impact on the participants, simplistic attempts to list down biographical experiences are not to be envisaged.

2. How do these influence (if they do) their conceptions of English and its pedagogy?

In relation to question 2, the study clearly brought out that 'received' linguistic representations ─ either implicit or explicit─ from the various contexts where the participants had experienced English shaped their conceptions of English. For instance, English came to be seen as a mode of communication, a cultural entity, a foreign language, and a social or an economic asset. I noted that the home emerged as a powerful indicator of the way participants constructed representations of different languages. I also observed that these early notions of language morphed or concretised in the light of eventual experiences but they never fully died out. Rather, initial notions were often reviewed and readjusted while new experiences were accommodated. Notions that were ingrained early on, namely in the home, could be perceived in the philosophy underlying the teachers' pedagogical practices. I also understood that, in a multi-lingual context, language teaching approaches could not be ascribed to experiences in a particular language, site or individual. For instance, though the participants' English teachers were a prime focus in the study, it was seen that teachers who did not teach English also conveyed powerful messages concerning pedagogy and the teacher/learner relationship. Teachers' biographical experiences of languages in a multi-lingual context thus stand as being the precursor to their pedagogical orientation in teaching English.

The range of teachers' biographical experiences and contexts, the varied interpretations of these experiences and subjective ways of enacting emerging understandings at the pedagogical level, challenged my attempts to provide clear-cut and straightforward answers to the above questions. I thus chose to highlight the inherent complexity underlying the process of teacher development. My study has brought to light a prominent feature of this process that has been under-investigated so far, namely the flow of enmeshed influences across the blurred or fuzzy boundaries of time and space. My ability to trace certain traits of the participants' practice back to the home and also to show how these have been

altered in the light of other experiences/influences substantiates this finding.

The analysis undertaken thus serves as a building block that will enable me to theorise my findings in order to answer the third critical question:

3. Why do teachers' biographical understandings of the English language influence their classroom practices the way they do?

The main consideration in Chapter 7 will be to theorise the fluid and complex process of teacher development.

Chapter summary

This chapter has focused exclusively on participants described as being 'un-typical' and has engaged in an analysis of their biographical experiences. Due to the specificity of their social background within a multi-lingual setting, the lived language experiences of these participants have shaped their conceptions of the English language in particular ways. Thus, informed by their own experiences of language use and language learning in both formal and informal situations, and in local and foreign contexts, the teachers have adopted teaching strategies with the aim of making language learning meaningful for their learners. The notion of blurred boundaries between different levels of experiences and teacher agency that had emerged from the analysis of the data in chapter 5, has been reinforced and extended in this chapter. Moreover, the limitations of sticking too closely to one's experiences and extending these to one's learners ─ as opposed to one's capacity to rise above these ─ has been further emphasised.

Significantly, in this chapter, I chose to highlight the complexity of the teacher development process rather than downplay it. I also commented on the way in which the movement of interwoven influences across permeable boundaries in diverse biographical contexts is generally glossed over. This emanates as a key finding in my study.

Chapter 6 closes the analysis phase. In the forthcoming chapter, I will move towards further levels of abstraction and the elaboration of a thesis.

Chapter 7

Building "the double helix model of teacher professional development"

Introduction

Why do teachers teach English the way they do? Do teachers' biographical experiences influence their pedagogical practices? If so, how? Why?

A number of questions were teeming in my mind at the outset of my study. I was intrigued by ECE teachers' divergent practices in teaching English and wished to comprehend what underpinned teachers' practices. I endeavoured to find out how far biographical experiences of learning English influenced the conceptions and subsequently the pedagogical practices of early childhood teachers while teaching the language. I scrutinised teachers' lived experiences with a view to understanding the level of complexity of biographical influences within the specificities of the Mauritian context. The overall goal was nevertheless to understand how the specific multi-lingual contextual landscape provides rich material for understanding the many potential sources of influence with regard to biographical influences, language teaching and learning experiences, as well as the emergent practices. It was deemed that this would generate adequate insight for theorising the pedagogical phenomenon of Early Childhood Education classrooms and their teachers.

Engaging in such a study indeed helped me to better understand teachers' practices. The findings brought to light the intricate, multi-layered and fluid ties between the teachers' lived experiences of language and their teaching approach. In this chapter, I present and describe my thesis which captures the essence of the complex process of teacher professional development.

Orientation to this chapter

The current chapter constitutes three sections. It draws upon the findings of my study and successive levels of analysis to put forward a thesis. In the first section, the biological construct of the evolutionary drift is used to describe and explain the process through which teachers' professional selves are forged in the midst of biographical experiences that intersect, coalesce and counteract each other. The concept is further elaborated in section 2, where the dialogical relationship between biography, experiences and practices is discussed. In the final section, the "double helix model of teacher professional development" is posited. It pulls together the different strands to show the intricate link between teachers' language experiences and their pedagogy.

Section 1: Evolving into teachers

One is not born a teacher but one *becomes* a teacher.

In Chapter 2, I presented the conceptual framework that had guided me during data production. However, by attending to the discourse of my participants, I discovered that the inter-connections between biography, language experiences and pedagogy are multifarious, convoluted and double-edged. My original conceptual framework was too restrictive, thereby failing to represent the complexity and messiness that teacher professional development entails. Becoming a language teacher in a multi-lingual environment, I have grown to understand, involves being beset by and having to negotiate a multitude of factors while forging one's professional self − which frequently blurs with one's personal self. The becoming of teachers cannot be conveyed through a simplistic and neat explanation. I therefore appropriate the metaphor of the evolutionary drift to explain this process since, in my view, it aptly captures this complexity while representing the fluidity of the process. My thesis is named: **"The double helix model of teacher professional development".** The choice of the metaphor and its relevance to the process of teachers' becoming will be discussed below.

In the first instance, I will explain the key constructs of the biological concept of evolution. I will then go on to detail the internal and external triggers to the evolution of species. Finally, I will map the biological process of evolution onto the exploration of the phenomenon of teacher professional development in view of explaining the process. If, at the outset of my study, my focus had been on teacher identity, my study brought about a shift towards teacher professional identity. This movement had germinated in chapter 2, during the literature review, where I had problematised the narrow confines within which research had placed the study of teacher professional identity. To me, the understandings that would emerge from such studies appeared dubious. My study confirmed my belief that personal and professional identity cannot be separated and that both informal and formal experiences carry similar weight in the development of teachers' professional selves. I observed how teachers' identities change over the course of their trajectory as evolving professionals. My understanding of 'teacher professional identity' is that it encompasses all aspects of the teachers' experiences that converge towards their professional growth.

7.1.1   The evolutionary drift of species

The term "evolutionary drift" is borrowed from the biological concept of the evolution of species which

suggests a process of continual change and development. Within this process, all life forms which originated from a common source then branched off and mutated into diverse species thereby developing individualised traits. The salient features of evolution are that: it is triggered by internal or external factors; it is affected by communal composition; and it does not always culminate successfully. These features will now be examined in more depth. Internal and external factors will be indicated and examined in turn. The nature of the change and the outcome of the process will be described.

7.1.1.1 Internal causes of evolution

Internal causes of evolution comprise mutation, genetic drift and natural selection. Central to these three processes is the fact that changes are brought about in the characteristics of individuals through a modification of the genes[95]. Each of these processes is explained below.

- Mutation refers to a permanent change in the genes due to a modification in the DNA, the "acid in the chromosomes in the centre of the cells of living things [which] determines the particular structure and functions of every cell and is responsible for characteristics being passed on from parents to their children" (Collins Cobuild Dictionary, 1993, p. 414). DNA is the substance that determines the characteristics of an individual, for instance the physical appearance or behaviour. Mutation generally occurs when the DNA does not copy accurately, such as during cell division. However, it may also be triggered by external causes such as exposure to radiation or chemical products. When the DNA breaks down in these circumstances, it may not repair back to its original condition and ends in a slightly different DNA. Mutations are random. They can be beneficial, neutral or harmful to the organism depending on the nature of the changes that take place. For example, some mutations, like somatic mutations, do not affect evolution since changes take place in non-reproductive cells and are thus not passed on to the offspring.

- Genetic drift occurs when there are variations in the genes of an individual or population through an entirely random process, for example when an individual leaves more descendants and, hence, passes on his genes to the successive generations. While all populations, be they large or small, undergo genetic drifts, the effect may be more noticeable in the constitution of small populations as similar traits are easily apparent.

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[95] The Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (1993, p. 602) defines a gene as "a part of a cell in a living thing which controls its physical characteristics, growth and development. Genes can change and reproduce themselves and are passed from one generation to another".

- Natural selection encompasses three features:

(i) variation in characteristics where individuals within a population display different traits, such as roses of diverse colours;

(ii) differential reproduction, that is variations in the rate of reproduction since the environment cannot support unlimited growth in a population. Factors like the availability of resources (food, water, space, etc), the spread of diseases and the presence of predators affect the extent to which population growth occurs;

(iii) heredity, that is individual traits that are passed on by parents to their progeny. (University of California Museum of Paleontology, 2006; Christ's college, 2009; O'Neil, D, 1993).

It is the combination of these processes that determines the traits that become predominant in a population. It is however interesting and pertinent to point out that successive generations are not replicas or clones of their forebears. Each generation reflects certain variations which result from a recombination of parental traits in the children. Hence, individuality is not forsaken in the process of evolution.

7.1.1.2 External causes of evolution

Evolution due to external factors, on the other hand, is characterised by changes in the organism that result from external stimulus, such as climactic elements, variations in the environment, or to ensure survival (Choi, 2012). For instance, in human evolution, it is hypothesised that walking upright was an adaptive behaviour to facilitate movement across the vast open African savannah as well as to free the hands in order to hold tools (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 2012). Similarly, the diversity of tools produced (e.g. stone, spears, arrows) reflects man's need to avail himself of food in different ways. Evolution is thus a crucial process which enables individuals to accommodate and adapt to their environment and, in many cases, to survive.

The assimilation theory is a relatively new hypothesis in the field of evolution. It has been put forth to explain how modern humans that evolved in Africa moved out to other regions and interbred with other existing human populations in Europe and Asia (O'Neil, 2012). Assimilation results in populations undergoing morphological or anatomical changes through interbreeding.

It must be pointed out that, far from being an isolated process, evolution is also affected by

community composition, since "community complexity can lead to unexpected ecological and evolutionary outcomes in populations" (Turcotte, Corrin & Johnson, 2012: nd). For instance, the migration of predators to a region may lead to the reduction or extinction of a species inhabiting that area. Changes are however not always one-sided whereby only species metamorphose in response to environmental features. In fact, species are also capable of altering the ecosystem within which they house to heighten their chances of survival. This can be evidenced in the Galapagos islands, where both predator and prey have evolved as a reaction to each other. On the island that houses long-necked tortoises, the cactus branches on which these animals feed are higher up the ground whilst, on the island with short-necked tortoises, the cactus branches are lower down (Bar-Yam, 2011).

When dealing with evolution, it is necessary to emphasise that this process does not always culminate in the successful perpetuation of species and that some of them drift to extinction due to a lack of adaptive and evolutionary capacity. The dinosaurs, mammoths and, closer home, dodos are examples of species that have extinguished along the path (National Geographic, 1996). The reasons for the fall of certain species are multiple. They result either from natural phenomena, as changes in environmental conditions due to climatic change and calamities, or human activity, such as hunting, pollution, deforestation and oil spills.

The highly elaborate process of evolution cannot be aptly represented through neat formulaic explanations. With changes being random, one-sided or mutual, and caused by multiple internal and external factors, the evolutionary drift cannot be depicted as a linear or sequential trajectory. Any attempt to predict the outcome or end result of such a process is surely self-defeating. While some individuals or species successfully gravitate up the evolutionary ladder through gradual modification, others fall off.

7.1.2 The evolutionary drift of teacher professional development

The echoes from the biological concept of evolution within the sphere of teacher professional development are striking. The becoming of teachers is as intricate, complex and unpredictable as the evolution of species and cannot be encapsulated in a reductionist, normalised, linear or causal explanation. The need to adapt or the influence of external factors compels the organism to undergo constant shifts. The evolutionary drift stands as a dynamic and on-going process which stresses the becoming as opposed to the static and restrictive implications of simply being. It aptly represents teachers' professional development which is always in the making. Teachers' selves are perpetually forged in the midst of numerous micro and macro contextual forces. The evolutionary drift suggests

that the process is responsive to many competing influences which activate a process that is neither static nor finite. Similarly, teachers' professional identity is continuously constructed and re-constructed in the light of their own 'internal'/ lived/ interpreted experiences. While they awaken to notions of language and pedagogy in the home, these are reinforced or modified as other factors act upon them thereafter. Teachers become conscious of the diversity of operational forces at work in the teaching and learning process. Their own learning becomes a powerful source of insight into pedagogical know-how. They are, on the basis of these experiences, capable of deriving significant notions of pedagogy which inform their instructional choices.

A number of parallels can be drawn between the evolutionary drift of species and of teachers' professional selves in multi-lingual contexts:

- Changes are triggered by both internal and external drives;
- Adaptive characteristics are displayed;
- The ability to modify the environment is noted; and
- Casualties are part and parcel of the process.

The evolutionary drift of teacher professional development will now be discussed. First, internal and external causes of teacher evolution will be examined. The scope of the analysis will be extended to consider teachers' self-initiated actions. The drift as a two-way process will then be dwelled upon. Finally, it will be brought out how influences on teacher development are random and unpredictable even if situated in particular contexts.

7.1.2.1 Internal drives

'Internal drives' refer to the teachers' conceptions of language, that is their beliefs, views and understandings of the language. As seen in Chapter 6, these are derived from their biographical experiences and become deeply embedded within their selves so much so that they shape the teachers' belief systems. Teachers' pedagogical principles are premised on these conceptions, which not only influence their view of the language, the way they use it and their attitude towards it, but also the way they present it to their learners. Teachers' beliefs and understandings of language are based on notions that they continuously construct and review in a light of new experiences, in a process that may even be unconscious.

7.1.2.2 External drives

External drives stand as the opposite of internal drives in that the influences come from 'without' or 'outside the self'. They emanate from the different places where teachers have used, learnt or taught the language and that have served to define their notion of language and pedagogy. These may also include people who have had a profound impact on the type of relationship they have established with the language and who have influenced their view of pedagogy. Teachers assimilate or reject features of language use and pedagogy on the basis of their experiences. The nature of such experiences and the way it affected them are especially significant in determining the validity of new possibilities.

However, external drives also signify foreign or global influences that impact upon teachers' beliefs about a language and its pedagogy. Language experiences can prove to be narrow, especially if they take place in insular contexts. On the other hand, exposure to language use in foreign lands, or with foreign people, is a powerful factor in teacher professional development. Such encounters serve to uncover alternative or 'other' images of language and pedagogy, and may culminate in reviewing currently held notions.

Further, one cannot ignore the fact that international forces also have an effect on what takes place in the classrooms. Affiliations with international agencies result in local educational and language policies emanating from or being tinged by global initiatives or decisions. Teachers are inevitably called upon to translate these into their practice.

7.1.2.3 Self-initiated actions gearing the drift

While internal and external drives appear to depict teachers as passive beings, self-initiated actions counter this view by foregrounding their spirit of enterprise. The cause and aim of actions initiated by teachers vary. Some teachers adopt a specific career path for love of a profession; others adhere to a particular teaching philosophy due to first hand experiences of its effectiveness or because it is aligned with their pedagogical principles; yet others engage in developing their own fluency propelled by the awareness that that the language is important in the current global and economic context. The impetus for the actions varies since it is entrenched in the specific histories of the teachers. In all cases, however, the teachers' decisions are geared by their deep conviction about the soundness of the principles they espouse.

An important aspect of self-initiated actions is the teachers' ability to rise from the confines of their personal experiences and beliefs and bring about changes with respect to their pedagogical principles, hence their practices. In doing so, teachers prove to be reflexive and enterprising since this involves changes in their belief-system.

7.1.2.4 Teacher development as a two-way process

Change as a two-way process reconciles the three aspects of the evolutionary drift of teacher development dwelt upon above. If teachers are impelled by internal and external forces, they are also capable of modifying their environment. Thus, a two-way process may involve adapting to new teaching contexts through accommodation, that is by changing oneself (for example, by developing resilience or adopting different teaching approaches). It can also be witnessed in alterations brought about in the setting, like changing/improving infrastructure, modifying the classroom set-up, establishing the lesson procedure and regulating learners' behaviour or language use.

7.1.2.5 Influences as random and situated

Multifarious factors impact upon teacher development in a process that is random and situated. It is thus difficult to anticipate the manner in which and the extent to which particular influences will affect teachers in given contexts. Similarly, the outcome remains unpredictable. Since no two teachers evolve in a similar manner, teachers retain their individuality with respect to their outlook towards the language and their teaching philosophy.

Successful teachers, as in the evolutionary drift, display adaptive capacities within the educational system. This includes the ability to find their feet in different teaching set-ups; tailor their teaching according to the profile and needs of their learners; reject or modify theories and programmes they deem to be ill-suited to their learners; as well as develop and embrace teaching approaches that they consider to be effective. The evolutionary drift of teacher professional development points to teachers who are responsive to experiences and can make the shift when required. Their evolution is however not merely reactive, since they have the agency to modify their setting or themselves in accordance with the educational philosophy they adhere to. Successful teachers are reflexive and capable of appraising as well as reviewing their knowings if required.

In line with the biological notion of the evolutionary drift, it must be pointed out that both survivors and casualties are part and parcel of the process. While some species adapt through a process of accommodation, redirection or elaboration, others capitulate to certain forces, thereby bringing about a limitation of the growth. Similarly, if some teachers display adaptive capacities, others choose to remain 'non-evolutionised'. The limitation in the growth of this category of teachers is due to a lack of responsiveness to external and internal factors and the sense they make of these. Thus, an adaptive approach is that which activates an evolutionary drift thereby allowing teachers to grow and develop their professional selves. Teachers who do not enact that drift end up being fossilised or atrophied. Their 'non-adaptiveness' is a consequence of their inability to re-imagine their own possibilities for growth and the rejuvenation of their practices.

My notion of the 'evolutionary drift of teachers' professional development' does not however ally itself fully with the notion of 'the survival of fittest' that implies that the strong will survive and the weak will fall by. In my opinion, the survival of the fittest model posits a deficit view of teachers while I choose to emphasise their agentic potential. My definition of the evolutionary drift recognises the individual's capacity to make choices and reach a level of heightened awareness of what evolution entails. There is no doubt that the biological system cannot be fully transposed upon the social system as the latter is imbued with issues of power, class and access while the former is characterised by natural selection, randomness and unpredictability. Moreover, I choose to emphasise the agency of teachers whose conscious decisions influence the direction of the drift over the notion of the survival of the fittest. Therein lie the limitations of the metaphor of the evolutionary drift of teacher professional development.

In this section, I explained and discussed the relevance of the biological concept of the evolutionary drift in representing the process of teachers' professional development. I drew parallels between the evolutionary drift of species and teachers' professional development. The causes of change and their consequences were also examined. The section ended with a distinction between teachers who successfully enact the drift and those who remain 'non-evolutionised'. Teacher agency was highlighted to indicate teachers' inherent potential for growth. In the section that follows, I will expand the discussion and explain what forces activate and perpetuate the drift, and how this takes place.

Section 2: Biography, experiences and practices

In this section, I take a closer look at the types of factors that drive the evolutionary drift of teacher development. The previous section had indicated that this results from the interacting trio,

namely biography, experiences and practices. In fact, a scrutiny of the lives of teachers has revealed that their professional development takes place at the crux where biography, experiences and pedagogy intersect, as shown in the diagram below.
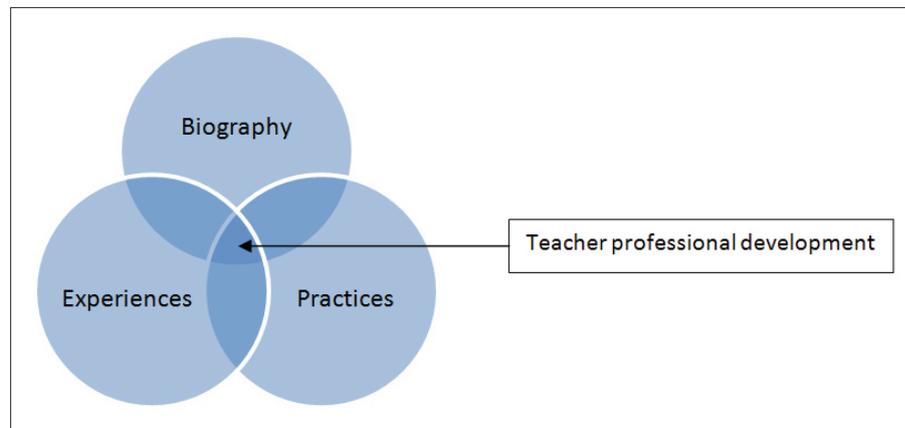
Figure 13: Site of teacher professional development

My study has identified these three elements as the three strands of teachers' professional development. They are significant in the following ways:

- **'Biography'** represents the **sources of pedagogy;**
- **'Experiences'** represents the **interpretation of pedagogy;**
- **'Practices'** represents the **enactment of pedagogy.**

A detailed discussion of the way in which the three elements interrelate to bring about teacher development ensues.

7.2.1 Biography: sources of pedagogy

Biography emanates as a rich and valuable source of pedagogical know-how. It encompasses learning experiences in both non-formal and formal settings such as the home, schooling, and teacher education programmes. Biographical factors initiate teachers into pedagogy ─ at times well before they decide to become teachers. Past experiences as learners in both formal and informal contexts sow the seeds and set the foundation for teachers' pedagogical orientation. They bring about a heightened awareness of what it means to teach and how learning takes place. In multi-lingual contexts, the type of language use individuals are exposed to and are involved in as members of a particular community, vehicle messages overtly or covertly about the function and importance of the different languages. Given the inter-connectedness of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, and of

language representations and language learning, teachers have initially **learnt languages** and also **about languages** by being socialised into their use. Language is thus intricately connected to their sense of self, hence their identity. Non-formal experiences of learning – which are often side-lined in research as compared to formal experiences – play a crucial role in forming conceptions of pedagogy and have a long lasting effect on teachers. The latter not only recognise the weight of non-formal influences in relation to their teaching, but are also able to appreciate the ways in which these forces impact on the teaching and learning process.

Additionally, by learning **through language[96]** , the teachers' awareness of what makes for effective teaching has also been sharpened. The issue is of even more pertinence in multi-lingual countries like Mauritius where the medium of instruction is English which, as mentioned previously, is a foreign language for the majority of learners. Enlightened by the way in which they themselves had grappled with learning during their schooling, teachers develop more sensitivity regarding the learners' need

to understand and be understood. Early experiences of learning not only provide seminal notions of teaching but are also used as sounding boards for eventual pedagogical decisions in the classrooms. In thinking back about the ways in which they were taught, teachers are guided by how effective they believe instructional approaches had been and how these had been 'lived'. In appraising their teachers' attitude and the approaches through which they had been taught, teachers go beyond cognitive considerations and take into account the affective domain, especially when applied to young learners. Consequently, teachers develop a more holistic view of teaching.

7.2.2 Experiences: interpretation of pedagogy

It is not enough to have lived. It is necessary to understand what we have lived and the messages that have been transmitted to us through these moments. Biography will be reduced to a mere series of events if it is not interpreted. It is only when one makes sense of what one has lived through that experiences acquire meaning. Similarly, mere exposure to a variety of language experiences and teaching approaches does not lead to an understanding of pedagogical concepts. Teachers must be reflective beings prior to becoming reflective practitioners. *Knowings* are situated and teachers' understanding of pedagogy is ingrained in what they underwent both as learners and teachers of languages. It is from this that they derive an insight into the teaching/learning process.

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[96] Language is also a medium of instruction.

Teachers have experienced language use in diverse settings and situations and have been at the receiving end of a variety of teaching approaches. They are in a privileged position to grasp the importance of making careful pedagogical choices and of the learners' role in the decision-making process. Practitioners are aware that teaching is not the mechanical act of transmitting knowledge; they acknowledge the necessity of involving the learners in the process. They ensure that the latter are at ease and able to participate in the lesson. While talking about their practice, teachers refer to the way in which they scaffold concepts, differentiate instruction, act as facilitators, modify their approach— in brief, take into account the multiplicity of learner profiles as well as internal and external factors that sway their teaching. They take conscious decisions and exercise their agency in order to shape their lesson according to the needs of their learners, while bearing in mind programmatic goals.

Further, teachers who are reflexive are 'non-accomodationists'; they are not restrained by what they deem to be the problems/social background/deficiencies, etc of their learners (a view that is heavily tinged by their own experiences as learners). Instead, they create opportunities to promote language learning. It is at the level of their choice of teaching strategies that the centrality of the learners prevails. Choosing to implement certain strategies, especially when these concern the use of a particular language, may even involve overcoming long upheld beliefs about that language.

7.2.3 Practices: the enactment of pedagogy

Teachers' practices are drawn from their biography and are an enactment of their beliefs about effective teaching. As such, practices are not static but constantly reviewed in the light of new experiences. As teachers continuously encounter new experiences, previously upheld beliefs get re-interpretd and re-adjusted. In order to achieve their objectives, teachers opt for a pedagogy that is adaptive. This implies the adoption of a teaching approach that is dynamic and constantly 'in the making' in accordance with macro, micro and biographical forces that influence the teacher.

In their enactment of their teaching philosophy, teachers are centrally driven by their learners. Interaction with different types of learners in diverse educational set-ups sharpens the teachers' pedagogical acumen so that they are able to use or adapt approaches to suit their learners. Teachers understand that instruction has to be pitched at the appropriate level and be mediated in a language that is accessible to the learners. Even though they do not overlook programmatic guidelines,

teachers take pragmatic decisions with respect to what they conceive to be achievable. Their overriding concern is the inclusion of their students in the instructional process. Based on their own experiences of having been beaten, sneered at and alienated as learners, teachers wish to construct an emotionally secure environment in their own classroom. As such, their pedagogy is tinged with social justice; it is reactive as it deliberately seeks to counter risks of possible negative experiences and it is responsive to the cognitive and affective needs of the learners. However, present and future experiences of language use and teaching also impact upon teachers' conceptions of language and teaching, so that their approach is constantly reviewed. Their pedagogy, which is informed by their biography, is thus reflexive, experiential and grounded.

It is this intricate connection between biography, experiences and practices that drives the evolutionary process of teacher professional development. In order to illustrate this concept, the double helix will be used as an explanatory model of the link between teachers' biography and their pedagogy.

Section 3: The double helix model of teacher professional development

Figure 14: The double helix

My motivation to use the double helix as a model to illustrate teacher development in my study is two-fold. In the first instance, in Biology, the double helix is used to represent the structure of DNA− the molecule that drives evolution through genetic modification. It is but fitting that it should be used as a

symbol of the evolutionary drift of teacher professional development.

Additionally, the structure and the process that takes place within DNA make its use as a symbol doubly relevant. As shown in Figure 14 above, the double helix consists of two connected strands and looks like a ladder spiralling up. The two strands that constitute the sides of the 'ladder' are called nucleotides. These are connected by rung-like structures known as nitrogen bases, namely adenine, thymine, guanine and cytosine. Information is stored as a code that is made up of these four chemical bases. While 99% of the three billion bases humans have are identical, it is the sequence of these bases that determines the characteristics of a person and that accounts for the uniqueness of each individual (Genetics home reference, 1993).

The double helix aptly depicts the process of teacher professional development which emanates from my study of teachers' biographical experiences of language. The two strands of the double helix stand for the two main elements of the phenomenon under my lenses: biography and pedagogy. The nucleotides that connect the strands symbolise the relationship between what the teachers have lived (biography) and their practical action (pedagogy). In my study, I wish to highlight the link that is made by what I term *'experiences'*. I define *'experiences'* as the way in which individuals *interpret, make sense of or derive understandings from* events in their lives. While the biography of several persons may reveal similarities, the way in which individuals make sense of these tends to differ given the subjective nature of perception − just like the components within DNA have a 99% correspondence in all individuals, but the sequences of the 'branches' (bringing biography and practice together) are unique. It is through the interpretation of these experiences (i.e. the sequencing of the bases) that individual teachers make sense of them. This explains why practices vary from person to person. It thus emerges that the sequences of these experiences are 'organised' to create particular unique formats in the lives of the teachers. Below is a diagrammatic representation of the evolutionary drift of teacher professional development illustrated by the double helix. While the different threads constituting the double helix have been indicated separately, "experiences" links "biography" and "practices" to highlight the dialogue and collaboration among these elements. The whole operates as a single system whereby the three elements work in conjunction.
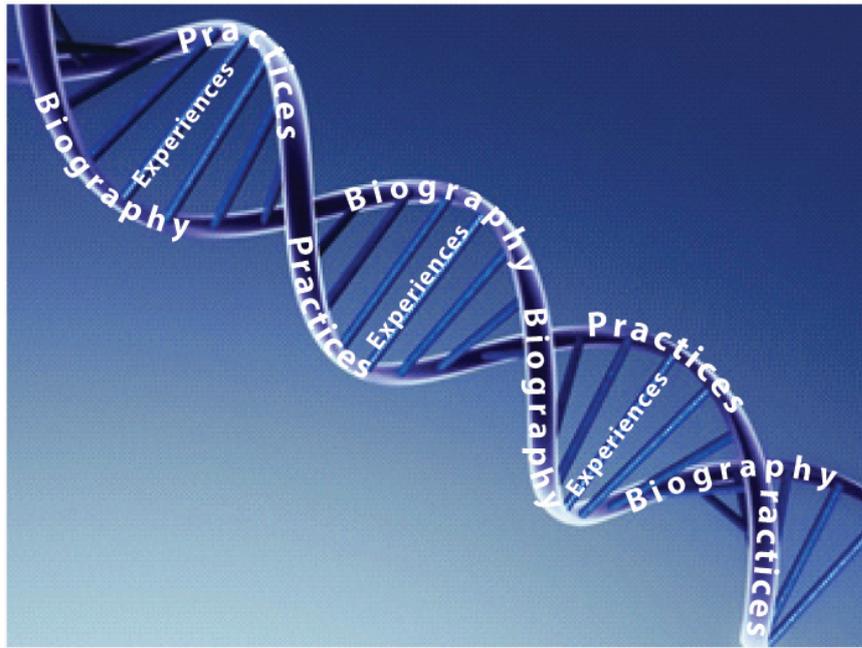
Figure 15: Evolutionary process of teacher professional development

The narrative analysis in Chapter 4 and the analysis of narratives in Chapters 5 and 6 had allowed me to answer the first two critical questions. The "double helix model of teacher professional development model" now enables me to answer the third critical question which reads as follows:

(3) Why do teachers biographical understandings of the English language influence their classroom practices the way they do?

The inherent dynamism of the double helix which spirals upwards highlights teacher professional development as an on-going process whereby biography and pedagogical practices evolve in the light of the continual experiences of teachers. Teachers' pedagogical stance and practices are derived from the understandings they construe from their lived experiences of learning and teaching languages. As part of a pulsating evolutionary process, teachers constantly interpret and re-interpret their biographical experiences as seen in the types of practices that are enacted. This makes for the adoption of a teaching approach that is reflexive and informed. However, biography, experience and practice intersect in different ways in different contexts thereby countering attempts to streamline the developmental process and pedagogical practices. Teachers' pathways in the developmental process are multiple and personal— just as their practice. While all teachers are caught up in the drift, they nevertheless retain their individuality with respect to both their outlook and their pedagogy.

The double helix model, thus, aptly represents the dynamic process through which teachers construct and re-construct their professional selves in an evolutionary process — the outcome of which is nevertheless influenced by the type of meanings they make. These meanings may not be stable, singular or solidified and are likely to drift over time in relation to internal, external and self -initiated references.

At this point, I ask: How does my theory of teacher professional development fill in the gaps in research?

In chapter 1, having freshly embarked on this study, I foregrounded the manner in which the practices of ECE teachers had been normatised and interrogated. Teachers had been viewed as reproducers of teaching models they had encountered during their own schooling and their (dogged?) use of the mother tongue had been viewed with incomprehension. I had pointed out how the absence of formal qualifications made them be viewed as 'lacking'. In chapter 2, I had interrogated attempts to pigeonhole components of teacher identity and study these in isolation. I had expressed the need to adopt

a more holistic view of teacher identity — within which the professional dimension was embedded. I had also questioned the way in which the informal aspect of teachers' lives had been sidelined in the study of teachers' development.

My study addresses all these issues and the double helix model of teacher professional development talks back to the existing literature. The model posited encompasses the **breadth** of factors identified as being relevant to the professional development of teachers — be these from the formal or informal contexts. No aspect of the teachers' lives is eclipsed in this model which is nevertheless **fluid** enough to represent the movement and interconnections among the multitude of factors. Additionally, the double helix model does not obliterate **individuality** at the expense of representing a collective experience and it accommodates both successful (evolved) and unsuccessful (non-evolved) teachers. The model explains teachers' pedagogical practices by bringing to light how teachers **interpret** their biographical experiences and enact their understandings through their pedagogy. It reveals how **reflexivity** enables teachers to rise above the confines of their own experiences in response to the needs of their learners. It however alerts to possibilities of **attrition** for those who are unresponsive to the diverse factors.

The double helix model of teacher professional development shows that teachers do not merely teach the way they were taught. While learning experiences during schooling strongly impact upon them, these experiences are interpreted in conjunction with others from the home, teacher education, as well as local and foreign contexts. Teachers are driven by the urge to cater for the requirements of their learners but their approach varies in relation to what they deem suits the latter best. This explains why the use of the mother tongue prevails in ECE classrooms. However, the degree to which it is used differs. The study has revealed that, in a multi-lingual context, languages cannot be viewed in isolation and the classroom is a multi-lingual space.

Chapter summary

This chapter marked the culmination of my study into the elaboration of my thesis: "The double helix model of teacher professional development". It constituted two sections. The first section described the construct of evolution that underlay the emergent thesis. It described the complex longitudinal process through which individuals and populations developed variations for adaptive purposes or, in some cases, drifted into oblivion. The biological construct was then set against the process of teacher professional development to explain how this takes place. The various causes of change, or lack of change, as well as their outcome were described. The second section focussed on the three key factors of teacher professional development: biography, experiences and practices. It explained the intricate link between teachers' biographical experiences and their teaching practices. It drew attention to the key role played by the interpretation of these experiences and their enactment in the classroom. The final section posited the new thesis, "the double helix model of teacher development", and illustrated the evolutionary drift of teacher development through a double helix. The DNA structure was used to explicate how biography, experiences and practices are linked and enact the drift of teacher professional development.

Having put forth my thesis, I propose to delve on the way in which my study has pushed contextual, methodological and theoretical boundaries in the chapter that follows. I will also state the limitations of the study and point to possibilities for further research.

Chapter 8: Concluding thoughts

Introduction

The previous chapter was devoted to the elaboration of two constructs. Drawing from the analysis of the data, a parallel was drawn between the biological theory of the evolution of species and teacher professional development. The metaphor of the evolutionary drift helped the make sense of the data and captured the different dimensions of the process as well as the factors involved. The next level entailed developing a theoretical model for teacher professional development. The proposed model was entitled 'the double helix model of teacher professional development'. It depicted the complex manner in which the three key features of teacher development ─ biography, experiences and pedagogy ─ act in conjunction to forge teachers' selves.

Orientation to this chapter

This chapter marks the culmination of my study. It puts forth the insights and emergent constructs that are derived from the research undertaken. It constitutes three sections: Section 1 dwells upon insights obtained at the methodological, contextual and theoretical levels. Section 2 brings out the implications of the study on teachers, teacher educators and policy makers. Section 3 elaborates on the limitations of the study and section 4 leans on the findings to propose future avenues for new research.

Section 1: Methodological, contextual & theoretical interests

This section dwells upon the new understandings that my study has brought about. It discusses the emergent constructs that are of methodological, contextual and theoretical interests.

8.1.1 Methodological interests

An attempt to comprehend what underlies teachers' pedagogical practices in language teaching entails researching why they do what they do and the way they do it. It thus involves digging into their understandings of language and teaching, their thinking and even their feelings ─ all those intangible elements that are hard to catch. The use of life history research has enabled me to link instructional moves with what prompt them. I was thereby able to grasp the process through which teaching practices are shaped since the methodology had scope to transport me to the different phases of the teachers'

lives (including prospecting into future scenarios) and into the diversity of sites where consequential experiences took place. In this sub-section dealing with methodological interests, I wish to highlight the following features of life history research to which my attention has been drawn in the course of my study:

- Life history research as a humane approach
- Data collection as an expansive process
- Foregrounding the voice of the phenomenon

8.1.1.1 Life history research as a humane approach

At the outset, an inquiry into language learning and teaching may appear to deal mainly with methodological practicalities, such as how to generate data, how to ensure validity etc. The adoption of a methodological approach such as life history research has brought forth the surprising revelation that language learning in a multi-lingual context can be a highly emotive experience as it is laden with political, cultural and social embeddedness. The use of biographical interviews whereby participants were encouraged to excavate distant experiences caused painful episodes from the past to resurface. Language is a means of communication; it permits adherence to a community, it fosters relationships among people. Inability to express oneself in a given medium can lead to rejection, alienation and a feeling of inadequacy. Similarly, the process of becoming is frequently strewn with hurdles and challenges. It is essential therefore, in dealing with one's conceptions of language and teacher development, to opt for a research methodology that helps uncover these aspects. Life history research brought to light how the death of a parent, racial discrimination, divorce, inability to communicate and parental opposition are closely connected to language experiences and becoming a teacher. By emphasising on the human dimension, life history research reinforces the notion that the world is made up of shades of grey rather than of absolutes ─ the element that places it poles apart from the positivist tradition. In doing so, life history research enables the projection of a three dimensional perspective of participants as it gives equal attention to the affective domain. This turns out to be enlightening when researching teacher identity and professional development. It emphasises the fact that teaching cannot be based on purely theoretical and external considerations but, rather, that provision should be made for the personal and private experiences of teachers from which their knowledge is derived.

8.1.1.2 Data production as a flexible and expansive process

Data production cannot be a rigidly defined process if it aims to extract the most possible information from the field. In dealing with human beings, especially, one has to find adequate means of drawing out the required information for a better insight into the phenomenon under the lens. The flexibility of the research methodology opted for allowed me to (i) use a supplement of tools and (ii) modify tools to accommodate the participants.

With respect to supplementary tools used, having the possibility to club narrative inquiry with observation, informal conversations, visual data and artifacts made for a more rounded and authentic representation of my participants. The fact that I could with converse participants in informal situations; freely interact with them in the course of the interviews instead of maintaining a rigid and distant researcher stance; see them in action in the classroom with learners, colleagues and parents; as well as note language shifts with respect to situation, purpose and audience, helped me to attribute more meaning to their words. While stories are filtered through the consciousness of the tellers and told in relation to the 'now' (who is doing the telling, to whom, and in what circumstances) and "tellers also directly or indirectly give their own interpretations and explanations to […] events" (Cortazzi, 2001, p. 385), using a diversity of tools allows the researcher to have a fairer representation of what lies behind the words and actions of the participants. In my study, the biographical interviews stood as a window onto the "landscape of learning" (Zhang, 2010, pp. 228-229) as they urged the participants to unravel their past experiences. However, accessing data through diverse means permitted a deeper examination and a better understanding of the phenomenon since I could juxtapose their past life with their present circumstances.

The flexibility of the research methodology also allowed me to modify the research tools in order to accommodate my participants' linguistic profiles. Rather than stick to English, I had to alter the medium ─ either to French or Creole ─ so that some of my participants could express themselves more extensively and with precision. I also had to be open to momentary language switches as I understood that a multi-lingual speaker may choose to opt for a temporary shift in medium in order to convey the weight of the idea or emotion being expressed. In a multi-lingual context, the medium in which the researcher interacts with the participant is an important consideration and an inflexible stance may end up being detrimental to data production. It is vital to understand that the medium should not be privileged to the detriment of the message. I realised that my interviews should not be conceived as a test where I would be weighing the teachers' proficiency and evaluating their effectiveness. It was hard to change

my stance given my position as teacher educator, but I understood that it was WHAT the participants said that mattered and not the language in which they said it. Interestingly, in a study on biographical language experiences and conceptions of language, the chosen medium versus the participants' preferred medium of communication is highly revealing with regard to the phenomenon under study, namely the participants' conceptions of the English language.

The need to modify and adapt the methodology suggests that the researcher does not (indeed cannot) forge ahead with the study unaffected by the process. In fact, the research context and the participants have a reflexive and interactive influence on the researcher as data producer. The flexibility which life history research offers enables the researcher to tailor the instruments according to the participants, thereby increasing the chances of obtaining rich data.

8.1.1.3 Foregrounding the voice of the phenomenon

Research does not merely entail a one-sided interpretation of findings ─ generally seen as being the prerogative of the (omniscient?) researcher. The creation of meaning as a dialogical process is well documented in the literature on narrative inquiry. While I was able to experience this as I engaged in my study, I also became conscious of the fact that the voice that emerged during the narrative analysis stage was not solely mine nor the participants'. The meaning was indeed derived from the experiences of the participants and jointly constructed by both the participants and me. Constant reflection during data production and scripting the narratives led me to probe further and seek clarifications from my participants. As I was engaged in this recursive process, it was interesting to note that the participants were not simply 'telling stories' or recounting the past, remaining detached and immune to the experience. For all (the participants and I), it was a moment to engage in reflection, of enlightenment through hindsight and of discovery. *Re*-searching (Samuel, 2009) this field (wherein many other re-searchers have treaded) was thus bringing up new insights, new avenues and new understandings that were co-constructed. While I, the *re*-searcher, was reviewing all my preconceived notions and long held beliefs, my participants too were in the process of looking at their past with new eyes. New insights were emerging on the spot. Life history research thus enables the creation of a 'third space'. It is in this alternative space that the voices of the re-searcher (teacher educator) and participants (teachers) merge to allow the phenomenon to speak and allowing new knowledge to emerge.

8.1.2 Contextual interests

The research, which was carried out in a multi-lingual island, highlighted the impact of contextual features on the development of teachers' conceptions and the teaching of English. The two key constructs that will be discussed in this sub-section are:

- Local anchorage/global outlook
- Charting the navigation map

8.1.2.1 Local anchorage/global outlook

The first contextual construct being presented is termed 'local anchorage/global outlook'. It adds fuel to the local/global debate by drawing attention to the limited notions of language use and pedagogy that can result from the adoption of too restrictive an outlook by focusing exclusively on the 'here and now'. In small island contexts, individuals who have not experienced the use (hence, utility) of the English language in their everyday life may be prone to harbouring a myopic vision of language policies with respect to that language. The need to master an international language becomes more meaningful if one has the opportunity to experience its use in real life or authentic situations, either by being in a foreign land or by interacting with foreigners or people who have had a foreign brush. Failing such experiences, the insularity of the place may lead to a restrictive view of the use of the English language and the way in which it should be taught. The narratives have revealed a consistent pattern regarding the impact of 'foreign contact' on the participants' learning and teaching of English. Such contact was seen to open up avenues for participants to recognise the communicative and cultural aspects of the English language and even to identify the communicative approach to teaching language as being most beneficial to learners. It emanates that the positive ramifications of such a contact may lead to the adoption of a more global outlook and thereby to a different conception of the language taught.

8.1.2.2 Charting the navigation map

Carrying out a study on teachers' experiences of language learning and their conceptions of the English language in a multi-lingual context and on the way in which these factors influence their teaching approach has shed light on the manner in which individuals build up their notions of languages and their uses, and of language pedagogy. The study has revealed that one's socio-economic and ethnic background, by influencing the choice and purposes of language(s) that one uses, shapes

one's conceptions of languages and budding pedagogical ideology.

The participants evolved in a multi-lingual setting which fostered exposure to and the use of diverse languages. However, the language(s) in which participants had been socialised from an early age, in the home, had a dominant influence on the way in which they grew to use and perceive different languages. Their linguistic creed was shaped by home experiences and, in the later years, they displayed more sensitivity towards influences that reinforced these notions about the language use. Thus, if irrespective of their level of proficiency in English, all participants acknowledged the need to master this language, the degree to which and the way in which it was used in the classroom varied. Participants who had experienced an overt push towards English as a linguistic and/or cultural capital due to parental influence, for instance, displayed particular appreciation of teachers who used communicative and child-centred approaches to teaching it as it had enabled them to be fully involved in the lessons and appreciate the language. Not only did they strive to learn the language but eventually, as teachers, saw the need to make their learners communicate more extensively in English. On the other hand, in cases where English had been absent or less prominent in the home, participants were more struck by the feeling of alienation they had felt as learners because they had been unable to understand and communicate in that medium ─ and hence, participate in the lesson. These participants were eventually seen to emphasise on the value of the mother tongue. As their lack of proficiency had severely hampered their ability to understand and communicate in English, making them outsiders in their own classrooms, they displayed added sensitivity to the predicament of their learners and willingness to accommodate the latter's mother tongue in the learning process. Pedagogical choices are thus closely derived from one's language experiences in the home.

8.1.3 Theoretical interests

At the theoretical level, the concepts that emerged from the study and that will be discussed in this sub-section are as follows:

- Developing conceptions of language in a multi-lingual context
- Teaching as the act of reconciling paradoxes
- Espousing theories grounded in practice

8.1.3.1 Developing conceptions of language and teaching in a multi-lingual context

In a multi-lingual context, teachers grow to understand and appreciate the value and functions of different languages ─ cultural, functional, communicative, academic, economic, affective and so on ─ and of language teaching approaches from their biographical experiences as language users, learners and teachers. Their conceptions of language and teaching are shaped by their:

- **Socio-economic background** which influences language choices in their home and environment and their impetus to learn English;

- **Ethnic background** which predisposes the individual towards languages they are predominantly exposed to or in which they interact with family members and relatives;

- **Schooling experiences** where, being at the receiving end of various language teaching methods, they are able to gauge the effectiveness or influence of these;

- **Apprenticeship experiences** as trainees where they observe language pedagogy in practice and its effect on learners;

- **Professional experiences** as teachers where they constantly strive to meet the needs of their learners while attempting to attain programmatic targets.

The above-mentioned factors do not act in isolation but in conjunction with one another and thereby shape the teachers' beliefs. It should be noted that these factors are themselves shifting in nature and subject to change when triggered by micro or macro forces. The teachers' belief system is thus in constant motion and evolves accordingly.

8.1.3.2 Teaching as the act of reconciling paradoxes

Mauritian teachers operate within a paradox: they have to teach and promote the use of a language that is neither their mother tongue nor that of the majority of their learners, and that is hardly used in everyday life. Additionally, they have to operate amidst a number of considerations: policy guidelines and requirements, learners' needs and level, and programmatic concerns. Teachers adopt a **pragmatic approach** to reconcile the two odds: that is maintaining communication with learners while teaching a second/foreign language. Driven by their own experiences as language learners, teachers understand the need to include learners in the instructional process. Their pedagogy is based on **affective**

considerations as they place their learners at the centre of their decisions. The extent to which the English language is spoken (as opposed to French and Creole) and the way in which it is taught (through a communicative or audio-lingual approach) is thus mostly dependent upon what they perceive to be their learners' profile, namely their background and mother tongue.

However, the teachers' underlying notion of the need to develop their learners' fluency in English also plays an important role. The extent to which they uphold this notion, as brought out above, is derived from early 'messages' about the English language in the home and their own motivation to learn it. English language teaching is an extension of the teachers' selves as it embodies their beliefs about language and their pedagogical ideologies. However, they do not thrive towards their objective at the expense of their learners' communicative ability. A pedagogical approach that is based on affective considerations ensures that their dual goal of teaching English and involving their learners in the process is achieved. This explains why different classrooms reflect diverse teaching approaches and uses of English.

Teachers therefore do not indulge in strategic mimicry nor do they blindly adhere to established curricula; their pedagogical practices are based on conscious choices forged by their pedagogical ideology, the foundation of which is laid in their own biographical experiences. Adopting an operational stance, teachers take programmatic and instructional decisions with respect to the profile and perceived needs of the learners — even if it entails the rejection (fully or partially) of programmes that are imposed from the 'top'. Teachers interpret the curriculum and evaluate its feasibility with their learners in mind. They appropriate it in a way that they believe will work for their learners. This explains why the programmatic force varies in different classrooms.

8.1.3.3 Espousing theories grounded in practice

Teachers' professional development undergoes a movement from practice to theory. Much of what they experience is more credible to them as they are able to derive in situ — in both formal and informal contexts; and from the perspective of a learner, trainee or teacher — the do's and don'ts of language teaching. Their apprenticeship or development is on-going and spans over various spheres and periods of their lives: they learn about effective methods from their roles as learners in the home and the school; as observers during internship; and as practitioners. With teachers, 'seeing is believing'; the experiential weighs more than what may be professed by policy makers, academics, researchers or theorists. This dualistic stance is seen in the way teachers refute the same theories when these are advocated as they

deem that they do not meet their learners' needs. In that respect, teachers' pedagogy is innately dynamic and being constantly readapted in line with new understandings of teaching and attempts to tailor it to their students' profile.

Section 2: Implications of the study

In Chapter 2, I had raised certain questions with respect to the schism between policy making and policy implementation in the light of the haziness around language teaching at pre-primary level; the degree to which teachers espouse and enact the curriculum and theoretical notions imposed upon them and the drive behind the teachers' choice of instructional approaches.

My study has shown that teachers draw upon their biographical experiences of language use and language learning as well as upon their knowledge of their learners to devise teaching approaches they believe will be effective. The study has also revealed that teachers can side-step policy if it is to the the advantage of their learners but this is possible only if the school ethos allows it. While it is easy to understand how a supportive school management can provide adequate leeway for teachers to manoeuvre, it is interestingly to observe that the absence of rigid policy guidelines results into more freedom for teachers to tailor their teaching according to the profile of their learners. These understandings enable me to put forth some implications that emanate from my study.

8.2.1 Implications for teachers

› Narratives are to be valued not just as a research method but as a tool to enhance retrospective reflection as a means of better understanding what underlie one's pedagogical approach. The interviews proved to be a fertile ground for participants to reflect upon their learning of English and the way in which it impacted upon their teaching. As they reminiscenced about their past, they became aware of the multiplicity of factors that had impacted upon their learning of English and shaped their teaching. Narratives, as reflective writing, can trigger critical awareness of the way in which our teaching is shaped and geared and this paves the way to professional development.

› It must be brought out that while teacher agency is an attractive concept, it can be a dangerous tool if used wrongly. Along with agency, comes responsibility and teachers must take the time to measure their actions and ensure that these are to the advantage of their learners. While the teachers' biographical influences are significant, they must not be allowed to outweigh the needs of the learners. Teachers must see to it that they do not remain caught up in their own past

and the persistent projection of their selves onto their learners so that the latter are deprived of opportunities of reaching out to what is offered to them. While the learners' profile is an important consideration, teachers must also set up pedagogical structures that will build up on the learners' potential to make them achieve new heights. They must keep abreast of changes in the field of education and constantly renew themselves. An exclusive focus on one's past experiences may overshadow possibilities and curb prospects that are within the reach of ─ and that are desirable for ─ the learners.

8.2.2 Implications for teacher education

› The study has revealed that teacher education does not always successfully prepare teachers to deal with their day-to-day business. Teachers come to teacher education programmes (TEPs) already equipped with rich experiences that informs their understanding of their role and the teaching process. By failing to consider the knowledge teachers bring with them, teacher education is perceived as being too theoretical and, at times, even irrelevant to the classroom reality. Rather, teacher development courses should aim to build on the teachers' experiences and understandings instead of brushing them aside in order to establish new theoretical bases. Teachers have worked towards their knowings on the basis of their personal experiences. Prior to introducing them to 'new' knowledge, it is necessary to understand where and how they are positioned. The effectiveness of TEPs lie in the way in which they are made to sit with teachers' prior knowledge. The lesson teacher educators can learn from teachers is to align teaching to the profile of learners in order to enhance its effectiveness. While teacher educators have rich theoretical understandings, they can be met half way by teachers who bring in their lot of practical knowledge. Teacher development is to be conceived more as a partnership between teachers and teacher educators because grounding TEPs in contextual realities will enhance chances to reconcile theory and practice. By acknowledging and considering the teachers' knowledge of the context and of learners, teacher educators pave their way towards a better understanding of those whose education they seek to enhance.

8.2.3 Implications for policy

› Teachers are the ones who have to reconcile policy and practice and yet, ironically, are more often than not left out of all policy and reform initiatives. The fact that teachers are the ones who spend more time in the teaching context makes them more aware of the dynamics in

operation and the implications of implementing policy decisions brought to them via the curriculum. Additionally, since they mediate between the curriculum and the learners, they are placed in a privileged position to gauge its feasibility and even its relevance.

Teachers are thus crucial to the process of policy development as they are in a position to bring valuable insight regarding the practicality of decisions to be implemented. Too often, policy makers turn their gaze outward ─ towards the goals established by international agencies ─ and lose track of the local reality, be it in terms of resourcing or learner profiles. In order to achieve desirable outcomes, policy makers must not lose track of achievable outcomes and should therefore work in partnership with teachers, giving them the space to adjust the curriculum in line with their learners' varying profile. The self-defeating 'one-size-fit-all' modus operandi should give way to a curriculum that takes into account the local context as reflected in the classroom reality and teachers must be seen as trustworthy partners in educational endeavours.

Section3: Limitations of the study

The study undertaken shed light on the dynamics of teacher evolution within a multi-lingual context. While it brought to the fore new insights about teacher development and language teaching in such an environment, it could be argued that the findings are specific to the Mauritian context where the study was undertaken and, as such, cannot be generalised to all multi-lingual contexts.

Moreover, as brought out by the findings, teacher evolution is an individualised process and the experiences of the five selected participants working in pre-primary schools cannot in any way faithfully reflect those of all teachers. Had there been more participants, other participants, or teachers practicing at another level of schooling, there is a possibility that the findings would have been different.

Another limitation of the study lies in the time span spent in the field. While data production lasted six months, it may be said that spending more time interacting with the participants could have brought forth a different set of findings. Also, the participants were observed in the classroom which was viewed as the end-point or culmination of their biographical language experiences. Had they been observed at home or had I had the opportunity of interacting with people from other influential spheres of their lives, the findings may have been different too.

The research method, while proving to be appropriate for the study, also has shortcomings. Narrative

inquiry relies on people's memories and it is not always possible to make distant events resurface. While much that had been lying dormant came back to my participants, there were occasions where no amount of probing and prompting enabled the participants to recall events that may have been of significance. Additionally, researchers are totally dependent on their participants, the amount of time the latter can put in for the purposes of the study, the degree of commitment, and what they choose to disclose. While participants are generally collaborative, they are busy people with their own schedule and the researcher is still a stranger — in my case, also a teacher educator. Such factors are bound to impact upon the quality of the data obtained.

Finally, I must admit that, like my participants, I am bound by my own biographical experiences. My personal experiences of language and my position as a teacher educator may have unconsciously influenced my reading and interpretation of the data.

Section 4: Future directions for research

Despite its limitations, the study has, in my view, paved the way for further research in the area of teacher development and pedagogical practices in language teaching in multi-lingual contexts. Future areas of research to be considered are suggested below:

- The home and other 'outside school' factors have emerged as powerful biographical forces. A closer look at teachers' informal experiences of language and learning and the way in which these influence pedagogical practices of teachers would shed more light on the phenomenon.

- Do all teachers undergo the same pattern of development? Considering teachers involved at different levels of schooling and teachers teaching other languages would help bring more insight into teacher evolution.

- How can teacher education be made more relevant to the needs of teachers? How can teachers and teacher educators work in collaboration? The role of teacher education should be reconsidered and the theory/practice reconciliation be examined more critically and realistically. The use of narrative inquiry as a tool for growth can here be investigated as a means of fostering more awareness of one's pedagogical motivations. This stands good for both teachers and teacher educators.

- Can the discourses of policy makers and policy implementers be aligned? Can a point of convergence be found between the curriculum that is professed, espoused and enacted? If so, how?

The findings of such an investigation would certainly make for more coherence while translating policy into practice.

The avenues for research are vast but the above emanate more directly from my study. In fact, the topic I have investigated may itself be replicated in another context or with other participants. A comparison of the findings would surely be of interest. While the model of teacher professional development posited has emanated from a study conducted in Mauritius, it is not unique to the local context but rather of universal application. It would be interesting to apply this model to specific contexts, for instance Africa, to better understand how the particularities of these contexts impact upon teacher development.

Chapter summary

The chapter marks the end of the study undertaken. It highlighted the emerging constructs of methodological, contextual and theoretical interest, showing how the research undertaken has pushed boundaries at these three levels. Implications of the study with respect to teachers, teacher educators and policy makers were then discussed. While it was deemed that the study had provided added insight into the area researched, its limitations were nevertheless emphasised. The chapter wound up by bringing up future possibilities for research.

Epilogue

After word...

The research questions have been answered, the thesis developed and a theoretical model presented. When all is done and said, is there anything left to say?

In the Prologue, I presented the study as arising from my own biography and I pondered over the different forces that had led to it. I foregrounded issues that preoccupied me, as a teacher educator, and posed these as critical questions. I opted to engage in life history research because I believed it would enable me to access those aspects of experience that are too often downplayed in the Mauritian research sphere and thus help me to understand teachers' professional development. This is how I realised that the personal and professional selves cannot be dissociated and that formal and informal experiences are equally significant. In the course of the study, I acknowledged that both the participants and I were changing as a result of the dialogical process in which we were engaged. The new insights I was obtaining were not leaving me indifferent. I was accommodating new insights and readjusting my understanding of who teachers are and why they do what they do the way they do. This experience is in keeping with the theoretical model presented as 'the double helix of professional development' and which reveals that we are constantly evolving, taking in new elements from what we daily undergo, making sense of it and modifying our *selves* accordingly. At the microcosmic level, we are replicating a process that takes place at the macrocosmic level, scripting and re-scripting our narratives in the midst of a grand narrative that is also forever being re-scripted. By interacting closely with my participants, listening to and observing them, I developed a better understanding of the way in which multi-lingual teachers conceive of the English language and the way they believe it should be taught. Through their stories, I came across a whole range of experiences and emotions ─ expected, surprising, happy and even grievous. It was edifying to learn how individuals in different contexts live language experiences, develop their language repertoire and operate with different languages. I have become more sensitive to the fact that some individuals cannot appropriate the English language and make it theirs; I have realised that everyone does not have the same rapport with English. But I have also seen that teachers use their own experiences as a sounding board in order to provide their learners with meaningful experiences. I appreciated the way in which my participants strove to make their learners the centre of their lessons and how some managed to counteract and rise above their restrictive biographical experiences to provide their learners with enriching language learning experiences. They have definitely enabled me to see teachers in a different light.

And yet…

I sit in departmental and institutional meetings and in a national forum on education. In the course of the discussion, I catch myself saying or thinking in annoyance: "Why don't some teachers collaborate when it comes to curricular innovation? Why aren't they open to new ways of thinking and doing? Why can't they move out of ingrained mindsets?" I voice out my irritation at the way they resist change and oppose what seems to be, to me, the most obvious course of action for the educational path we wish to chart for our children in a world that is increasingly globalised.

I carry out teaching practice visits and am more tolerant in the face of some teachers' lack of fluency. I now know why the use of French or Creole prevails more than English and I acknowledge the necessity of switching codes. But still, I ask: "Shouldn't they, as teachers of English, make a conscious effort to develop their own fluency? Isn't it their responsibility to ensure that their learners are more exposed to correct English and shouldn't they create opportunities for the learners to use the language more frequently?"

I realise that, while my study has brought about a better understanding of teachers and their pedagogical approach, it has given rise to new questions. In fact, new issues have emerged. While the scope within the evolutionary drift suggests that teachers are constantly moving ahead, the study also alerts me to the limitations of adopting too narrow a perspective. Engaging in navel gazing by focusing solely on the 'here and now' of the classroom leads to shutting out the broader considerations of what education stands for in the face of the hegemonic forces, we as a small island state are faced with. This awareness cautions me and holds me back from falling prey to romanticising the agency and capacity of teachers as leaders of change in isolation of dialogue with these other international forces. After all, the evolutionary drift is not only directed by internal forces (e.g. the self or the Mauritian context) but also by external factors (e.g. climatic forces, international drives). When the double helix model is too reliant on 'the self' as source of change, it might activate a process of attrition rather than evolution. This understanding has significant ramifications for the way in which self-inquiry is promoted as a methodological approach within the field of teacher education ─ as can be seen from the way action research is promoted as a powerful development tool for teacher development. But it must be said that, going to the other extreme of adopting only an outward gaze is also limiting. Policy, in Mauritius, is generally 'inspired' from foreign models. Driven by the urge to look modern and in line with international trends, it may not be paying adequate attention to local realities. My study troubles such positions and places the locus of change for teacher professional development at the intersection of macro cultural and contextual, and micro institutional forces.

I now know that, like teachers, teacher educators and policy makers are caught up in the evolutionary drift, interpreting experiences and making meaning from their respective (paradigmatic) biography. Each of us is trapped in our 'world' and adopts a different (subjective) perspective. Is this pointing to the potential limitations of self and biography which may, after all, be inherently narcissistic? Working towards effective teacher professional development certainly requires teachers, teacher educators and policy makers to move beyond narcissistic inquiry to include broader interconnecting sources of influence over the nature, action and practice of teacher professional development. Where is the point of convergence then? Where do teachers, teacher educators and policy makers meet to chart out a route that can be travelled on through a collective enterprise? Can we move out of our own 'worlds' and reach out to others? How?

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APPENDICES

Appendix i : Statistics of languages spoken in Mauritius

Total Population, Republic of Mauritius: 1,236,817		
Home Language	*No. of speakers*	*%*
Creole	**1,069,874**	**86.5**
Bhojpuri	65,289	5.3
French	51,214	4,1
Hindi	8,690	0.7
English	5,573	0.4
TOTAL	1,200,640	97

(Source: Statistics Mauritius)

Appendix ii: MIE's mandate at a glance

Teacher Education

Unlocking potential

Transformative pedagogy

Creating opportunities for all

PhD (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

EdD (University of Brighton)

MA in Education (University of Brighton)

Post Graduate Diploma in Special Education

Post Graduate Diploma in Ed Management

Post Graduate Diploma in Ed Leadership & Management

Post Graduate Certificate in Education (FT/PT)

Bachelor of Education (FT/PT)

Teacher's Diploma Secondary (FT/PT)

Teacher's Certificate

SECONDARY

Diploma in Educational Supervision & Inspection

Diploma in Educational Management

Teacher's Diploma in Special Educational Needs

Teacher's Diploma *(Pre-Service/In-Service)*

Advanced Certificate in Education

PRIMARY

Teacher's Diploma in Early Childhood Education

Teacher's Certificate in Early Childhood Education

Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education

PRE-PRIMARY

Curriculum Development

National Curriculum Framework

From policy to practice

Research and Consultancy

Informing policy

Transforming practice

Expanding Knowledge

Appendix iii: Language descriptors in National Curriculum Framework Pre-primary Mauritius

4.2.3   The descriptors for Communication, Language and Literacy

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY			
DESCRIPTORS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	YEAR 1	YEAR 2
Communicate with others	Use gestures, facial expressions, body language such as eye contact and language to express personal needs, ideas, experiences and feelings.	☺	☺
	Use communication to develop bonds: • Participate in and contribute to group activities	☺	☺
	• Share, play and interact with others	☺	☺
	• Show respect	☺	☺
	• Express and exchange ideas, opinions		☺
	• Listen to others	☺	☺
	• Inform others and self	☺	☺
Develop and demonstrate appropriate Listening skills	• Perceive, identify, discern and locate sound and voice sources	☺	☺
	• Respond to instructions	☺	☺
	• Sustain listening attention to speech, songs and playback of recorded audio materials	☺	☺
	• Show interest in, enjoy listening to and participate/join in conversation, songs, nursery rhymes and stories	☺	☺
Share and relate to others	• Respond to what has been heard through relevant questioning, by giving own comment, by asking for clarification or by expressing own thought, idea or feeling		☺
	• Anticipate main events and outcomes	☺	☺
	• Recognise, interpret and value moments of silence	☺	☺
	• Imitate, rehearse and reproduce what has been heard	☺	☺

Build and extend vocabulary and show interest in new words	• Use familiar and appropriate words in the target language to identify and describe objects and concepts, express feelings, thought and needs		☺
	• Use new words reflecting new learning to make communication more precise and extensive in the target language	☺	☺
	• Use words to add structure to space (on, under…), time (past, present, future), chronology (before, after…) and direction		☺
Engage in speech audibly, with clarity and confidence	• Develop distinct articulation	☺	☺
	• Use correct pronunciation	☺	☺
	• Control breath during speech	☺	☺
	• Use tone, pitch, loudness, rhythm/pace, upauses and voice modulation with effect	☺	☺
	• Use simple to more complex language structures to communicate orally for a range of purposes and over increasing duration	☺	☺
	• Use the target language progressively and with increasing confidence to express needs, thoughts, experiences and feelings	☺	☺
	• Adapt language to the audience (adults, peers, teacher, friends…) and to the context	☺	☺
	• Exploit language to describe a situation and event	☺	☺
	• Adopt appropriate communication behaviours, for example, by listening and responding to others, asking questions and clarification, initiating, sustaining and closing conversations, using polite forms: please, thank you, excuse me…	☺	☺
	• Narrate a simple story, recite a poem, sing a song, recite a nursery rhyme	☺	☺
	• Structure speech and narratives	☺	☺
Acquire and develop reading skills	Picture reading • Read and interpret pictures/ drawings	☺	☺

	• Use drawings to convey meanings/ messages		☺	☺
	• Make out and follow the storyline expressed in pictures		☺	☺
	• Recognise conventional graphic displays, e.g. traffic signs, classroom displays…			☺
	Text reading • Be aware that print carried meaning and information		☺	☺
	• Decode common and simple prints			☺
	• Encode messages in print form			☺
	• Become familiar with written texts		☺	☺
	• Recognise a range of familiar sight/high frequency words (own name, days of the week, name of fruits…)			☺
	• Identify and read the letters of the alphabet			☺
	• Begin to read syllables, words and simple sentences under guidance			☺
	• Show care, satisfaction, joy, understanding while interacting with books or other printed materials		☺	☺
	• Display curiosity and interest while interacting with printed materials (ask questions, identify familiar letters and words, enquire about new words…)		☺	☺
Demonstrate early writing skills	• Adopt a correct writing posture		☺	☺
	• Hold a pencil properly		☺	☺
	• Draw and colour with interest		☺	☺
	• Draw frames, shapes, skillfully			☺
	• Give meaning to graphical symbols (e.g. a tick indicates correctness)			☺
	• Form the letters of the alphabet with increasing precision			☺
	• Copy own name and familiar sight words		☺	☺

	• Engage in writing activities (e.g. produce greeting cards)	☺	☺
Engage in speech audibly, with clarity and confidence	• Reflect on what is heard		☺
	• Questions actions/events/meanings		☺
	• Propose an intelligent opinion		☺
Engage in creative output	• Add a part to a song	☺	☺
	• Draw, illustrate, colour, according to personal taste and in interesting ways		☺
	• Retell story in own words		☺
	• Develop a story and bring it to closure		☺
	• Be capable of dramatic oral productions		☺
	• Enact a story/an event		☺

Appendix iv (a): Outline of Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education programme, Mauritius Institute of Education

6.1 Programme Grid

Area of Study I: Professional Studies

Parts	Module Coordinator	Number of Credits	Semester
PCL 111: Child Development: **An Introduction** Introduction Child Development and learning Theory (Key Figures) (incl. Theories of Child Development and learning)		4	1
PDD 111: Domains of Development • Aesthetic Development • Cognitive/intellectual Development • Emotional and-Social Development • Imagination and Symbolic Thinking • Language Acquisition • Moral Development • Physical and Motor Development • Play and Development • Social Development and Development of relationships		6	1
PCD 111: Curriculum Domains • Visual and Spatial Arts • Creativity • Health, Nutrition and Safety • Language Arts • Literacy issues • Mathematics Literacy • Music • Movement and Physical Education Environmental Science • Social Studies		6	2
Total Credit Units		**16**	

Area of Study 2: Curriculum Studies

Parts	Module Coordinator	Number of Credits	Semester
CCP 111: Curriculum Practice • Curriculum Materials • Curriculum planning, development based on needs of the child • Comprehensive curriculum and Inclusive curriculum • Technology and The Child • Classroom Environment and Management • Teaching and Learning Strategies • Educational Outcomes		5	3
CAE l11:Assessment and Evaluation • Child study and classroom observation techniques • Diagnostic testing and remedial action • Skills of data collection		4	3
CCC 111:The Child in Context • Community and Parental Relations Convention on The Rights of The Child Care and Protection • Child Abuse • Socially deprived and disadvantage • The gifted child		5	4
Total Credit Units		**14**	

Area of study 3: School Based Experience (SBE)

Parts	Module Coordinator	Number of Credits	Semester
SBE III: School Based Experience To be assessed through school visits and portfolio		**5**	**3 & 4**
Total Credit Units		**5**	

Area of study 3: Project Study Write-up

Parts	Module Coordinator	Number of Credits	Semester
PSW III: Project Study Write up		**5**	**3 & 4**
Total Credit Units		**5**	

Appendix iv (b): Outline of Teacher's Certificate in Early Childhood Education programme, Mauritius Institute of Education

4.2 Course Outline

The programme will consist of 20 credits as indicated below:

No.	Modules	Code	No. of credits	Mode of Assessment
1	The Child and the Pre-Primary School	TCECE 1101	1.5	CW 100%
2	Language and Communication skills	TCECE 1102	3	Exam 30%, CW70%
3	Classroom Practice	TCECE 1103	1.5	CW 100%
4	Basic Skills in ICT	TCECE 1104	1	Exam 30%, CW70%
5	Using ICT in Teaching	TCECE 1201	1	CW 100%
6	Creative and Aesthetic Development	TCECE 1105	2	CW 100%
7	Movement Education	TCECE 1202	1.5	CW 100%
8	Health and Safety	TCECE 1203	1.5	CW 100%
9	Body and Environmental awareness	TCECE 1204	1.5	CW 100%
10	Logical Mathematical Development	TCECE 1205	1.5	Exam 30%, CW70%
11	SCHOOL BASED EXPERIENCE.	TCECE 1106	4	Exam 30%, CW70%
	Total no. of credits		**20**	

Appendix iv (c): Outline of Teacher's Diploma in Early Childhood Education programme, Mauritius Institute of Education

The Programme is structured as follows:

	Year 1- 21 CREDITS			
NUMBER	**COMPONENT**	**No. of CREDITS**	**MODE OF EVALUATION**	**CODE**
1	language Proficiency I	11/2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/1001
2	language Proficiency II	11/2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/l002
3	Early Identification, Intervention and Inclusionary Practices	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/l003
4	Communication and Language Development I	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/l004
5	Expressive, Aesthetic and Creative Development I	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/1005
6	Mathematical and logical Thinking I	2	Exam 70% CW30%	TD/ECE/1006
7	Science for Early Childhood I	2	Exam 70% CW30%	TD/ECE/1007
8	Health and Physical Development	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/l008
9	Curriculum Studies in Early Childhood I	1	CW 100%	TD/ECE/1009
10	Assessment in Early Childhood I	1	CW 100%	TD/ECE/1010
11	Contemporary Educational and Cross Cultural Issues in ECE	1	Exam 70% CW30%	TD/ECE/1011
12	Bringing Technological Innovation into the Classroom	1	CW 100%	TD/ECE/1012
13	SBE	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/1013
	TOTAL	**21**		

Year 2- 21 CREDITS				
NUMBER	COMPONENT	No. of CREDITS	MODE OF EVALUATION	CODE
1	Psycho pedagogy	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2014
2	Communication and Language Development II	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2015
3	Expressive, Aesthetic and Creative Development II	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2016
4	Mathematical and Logical Thinking II	2	Exam 70% CW30%	TD/ECE/2017
5	Science for Early Childhood II	2	Exam 70% CW30%	TD/ECE/2018
6	Health and Safety in Early Childhood	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2019
10	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2020
11	Using ICT in Teaching	1	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2021
12	Curriculum Studies in Early Childhood II	1	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2022
13	Assessment in Early Childhood II	1	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2023
14	SBE	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2024
15	inquiry Based Project	2	CW 100%	TD/ECE/2025
	TOTAL	**21**		

4.1   School Based Experience

4.1.1   The School Based Experience is an integral part of the programme which carries 2 credits.

Trainee educators will be assessed through:

{i} Classroom practice

{ii} School-Based Experience File {SBE}

Appendix v: Sample module content, Teacher's Diploma Early Childhood Education programme, Mauritius Institute of Education

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TD/ECE/1004- COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT I– ENGLISH/FRENCH

Module Title: Communication and Language Development I– English/French

Module Code: TD/ECE/1004

Number of credits: 2

Aim

This module aims at equipping trainee educators with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude in order to develop the language and communication skills of pre-primary children in English and French.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the module, trainee educators should be able to:

• carry out an appraisal of the curriculum for communication and language development

• demonstrate understanding of the concept of language readiness

• describe the different ways in which children acquire and use language between ages 3-5

• show an understanding of basic principles of language teaching to young learners in an SL/FL (Second Language/ Foreign Language) situation

• plan and implement a range of activities to develop pre primary children's language skills

• use a variety of tools to assess language learning at pre-primary level

Content

• The curriculum for communication and language development

• Language readiness and emergent literacy

• Creating a language rich environment

• An overview of language teaching strategies

• Lesson planning: different stages of a language lesson

• Teaching Language within a thematic approach

• Assessing language learning

Teaching and Learning strategies

Lecture, group work, brainstorming, discussion, hands-on activities.

Mode of Assessment

Coursework 100%

Appendix vi: Ethical clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Research Office (Govan Mbeki Centre)
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

29 November 2011

Mrs A Ankiah-Gangadeen (210556554)
School of Human and Social Sciences

Dear Mrs Ankiah-Gangadeen

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1254/011D
PROJECT TITLE: Mauritian teachers' language experiences and language pedagogy in early childhood education: a Life History approach.

EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process:

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc Supervisor – Professor Michael Anthony Samuel
cc Mrs S Naicker/Mr N Memela
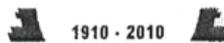
1910 · 2010
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses: ▪ Edgewood ▪ Howard College Medical School ▪ Pietermaritzburg ▫ Westville

Appendix vii: Template of letter to gatekeepers for access to pre-primary schools

To: ……….
   Director
   …………

From: Mrs Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen
   Associate Professor
   English Department
   Mauritius Institute of Education

Date:………..

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Authorisation to enter school premises

I am Mrs Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen, Associate Professor in the English Department at the Mauritius Institute of Education.

I am currently enrolled on a PhD in Education at the University of Kwazulu Natal in Durban, South Africa. My supervisor is Professor Michael Samuel from the Faculty of Education at the University of Kwazulu Natal. My research project is entitled: Mauritian teachers' language experiences and language pedagogy in Early Childhood Education. The aim of my study is to explore pre primary teachers' experiences of the English language and examine how these influence the way they teach the language.

….., a teacher from your school, has agreed to be a participant in my study. For the purposes of data collection, I will have to observe her during at least three days. It would therefore be appreciated if permission for same could be granted. I wish to assure you that I will be present merely as an observer and will not intrude in the running of the lesson in any way. Should my presence have adverse effects on the class, I will leave the premises immediately.

If you wish to have any further information about any aspect of the study, feel free to contact me on 7646456 or at my office at the Mauritius Institute of Education (Ext. 606). You may also contact my supervisor at 031 260 1648 or by email samuelm@ukzn.ac.za or the research office of UKZN: Ms Phume Ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

A Ankiah-Gangadeen

Appendix viii: Letter to Director, Mauritius Institute of Education

31 January 2012

To: The Director

Mauritius Institute of Education

Reduit

Through: The Head of School of Arts and Humanities

Dear Madam,

Subject: Permission to carry out field work during working hours

As part of the requirements of my doctoral studies, I am about to start data collection. This phase should last about six months. It will involve interviewing nine participants (i.e. teachers from pre-primary schools) and observing each of them teaching for about three half days. The interviews will take place after school hours while observation sessions will be conducted in the morning preferably.

I would be grateful if you could allow me to carry out the field work during working hours. I wish to assure you that the needful will be done so that it does not hamper my duties at the MIE. Arrangements will be made to reschedule interviews or observation sessions as and when required.

I thank you for your understanding and hope to receive a positive reply.

Yours faithfully

A Ankiah Gangadeen (Mrs)

Associate Professor

English Department

Appendix ix: Informed consent document for participants

Dear …………………,

I am Mrs Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen, Associate Professor in the English Department at the Mauritius Institute of Education.

I am currently enrolled on a PhD in Education at the University of Kwazulu Natal in Durban, South Africa. My supervisor is Professor Michael Samuel, from the Faculty of Education, University of Kwazulu Natal. My research project is entitled: *Mauritian teachers' language experiences and language pedagogy in Early Childhood Education.* The aim of my study is to explore pre-primary teachers' experiences of the English language and examine how these influence the way they teach the language.

My interest in the topic is due to my position as a teacher educator. It stems from my observations of teachers teaching English to young learners. Classroom practices have revealed that individual teachers have their own sets of beliefs with regard to their subject, their learners and learning processes. I therefore wish to probe more deeply into the issue.

It would be appreciated if you agreed to participate in the study. Should you be agreeable to do so, this will entail being interviewed on your experiences of the English language to date. At least three interview sessions will be required. During the interviews, you will be asked to relate occasions when you used the English language and your learning experiences. The interviews will be recorded with your permission. They will take place in settings and during timings that are convenient to you. Should you have to travel to reach these locations, travelling expenses will be covered by me. You will also be observed in your classroom for three days. Clarifications or information may be sought related to these observations.

It is understood that you may refrain from answering questions you are not comfortable with or revealing information considered personal or confidential. You may also withdraw from the study at any point without any prejudice to you. Please note that there are no financial or other benefits for participating in this study. Your contribution will however be considered invaluable in investigating an area which has undergone little scrutiny so far. You are assured that your input will be treated confidentially. Your anonymity is also guaranteed.

If you wish to have any further information about any aspect of the study, feel free to contact me on 7646456 or at my office at the Mauritius Institute of Education, Reduit. You may also contact my

supervisor at 031 260 1648 or by email samuelm@ukzn.ac.za or the research office of UKZN: Ms Phume Ximba. Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

Should you be agreeable to participating in the study, you are requested to sign the declaration of intent below.

DECLARATION

I…………………………………………………………………… (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

   SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   **DATE**

…………………………………………………………   ……………………………

Appendix x: Data production plan

CRITICAL QUESTIONS	SOURCE OF DATA	INSTRUMENT	HOW MANY?	WHEN?	Anticipated Data Analysis Strategy	NOTES
1. How do teachers' biographical experiences of learning English shape their views of the English language?	Teacher s' biographical interviews	**Pilot Interview Schedules**	1 interview before school visit (1 hour) No. of participants: 1	August 2011	This will form the basis for a refinement of the sampling process to select the participants of the study.	Scoping interview: biographical experiences of learning English
1. How do teachers' biographical experiences of learning English shape their views of the English language?	Teacher s' biographical interviews	Interview Schedules Experiences of learning languages at: 1. home, 2. primary school, 3. secondary school, 4. post school **Research log** for field notes **Personal artifacts**	1 hour each conducted in home, classroom, at MIE	January – June 2012	Transcribe interview; Write storied narratives ; code data; seek emerging patterns; establish broad categories; refine categories gradually.	Purposive selection of six participants Infer teachers' beliefs, views and assumptions about the English language from narrative accounts
2. To what extent do these biographical experiences influence the way they present the English language to their learners?	Classroom observations Pre-Observation interviews Post-Observation interviews Research log for field notes	**Observation Schedule Pre Interview Schedule Post Interview Schedule**	3 consecutive days for each participant	January – June 2012	Write-up of field notes; Analyse observation schedule regarding use of/choice of strategy/resources to understand their practice	Pre Interview to establish aim of lessons, procedure Observe how teachers present the English language to their learners Post interview to answer specific queries regarding approach based on observation Consider how this is linked with their own experiences

	Official artifacts	**Curriculum framework** **Official circulars** **Teaching resources**		Note salient features of teachers' practice	Secondary sources; e.g. to observe how teachers these in relation to what they profess about their teaching approach
3. Why do teachers' biographical understandings of English language learning influence their classroom practices the way they do?	Interviews Classroom observations	**Storied narratives** **Observation schedules** **Write up of field notes**	1 hour each conducted in home, classroom, at MIE	January – June 2012	Establish and analyse links between biographical experiences and pedagogical practices	Identify emerging links and discrepancies between teachers views, beliefs and assumptions of language and classroom practices

Appendix xi: Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule 1: Language experiences at home

Preamble: This study is about understanding the language experiences of pre-primary teachers and to study how it influences the way they teach English. Today, however, we will start with some general questions.

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
   o Prompt: As in, who is the person I am talking to?
   o Additional prompts: teaching experience, professional qualifications.
2. Can you now tell me about your home, where you grew up?
   o Prompt: Where did you live? How many people were there in your house?
3. Let us now talk about your language experiences at home:
   o Prompts: What language (s) did you use with family members?
   o What about the languages used when you socialised or for leisure activities (songs, films etc)?
   o Why did you use these specific languages in those specific situations? (audience/purpose/ context)
   o Can you tell me how you would feel about using English instead of these other languages? Why is that so?

Interview Schedule 2: Language experiences at pre-primary, primary & secondary school

Preamble: Last time we spoke about languages you used at home. Is there anything you would like to add to what you said last time?

Today we will talk about your language learning experiences at school.
1. You told me that you have been teaching in this school for---- years. Can you tell me about the schools you attended?
   o Prompt: Where were they situated? How did you feel there? How were your teachers? Who was your favourite teacher? Why? How about your language teacher?
2. Can you tell me about your language learning experiences at school? How would you describe X the student in the language class, doing homework, with other students?
   o Prompt: How were you taught? How did you feel in the classroom? How did that make you feel

towards the language?

- o Additional prompts: Were your learning experiences the same as that of your pupils?
- o Which languages did you find easier to learn? Why do you think that was so?

3. Can you recall any event related to the way you were taught or learnt languages?

4. What languages did you speak with friends, with teachers etc? How would you feel about having to use English for the same purpose?

Interview Schedule 3: Post schooling language experiences

1. What language(s) have you been using the most since you have left school?

- o Prompt: Can you tell me when you use these languages?

2. How far have you been using English since you left school? How would you feel about having to use English? (Feelings/attitudes/beliefs about the language)

3. How do you feel about teaching English?

- o Prompt: Do you find it the same as teaching other subjects?

4. How do you teach English?

5. What makes you teach English this way?

Appendix xii: Extract from interview 1 with Francine to demonstrate difficulties to communicate in English

F: Yes. I'm...I'm married, I've three children....and, ur, of....children of 30, 30, 26 and...20 years. Two boys...and one... girl...and I am in pre primary, ur, about, about 30 years...and...I , I like very much to teach... the there... this kind of ...

A: young children

F: young children...and, ur, in St Gabriel, I I work about 17 years.

A: You've been here, in this school, for 17 years?

F: For 17 years, yes. Before, I work at my home.

A: Ok.

F: Yes.

A: And, ur, basically, otherwise at home, where did you grow up?...Which, in which region and..?

F: At, at Moka.

A: You've lived most of your life in Moka?

F: Yes, yes.

A: Moka?

F: Yes.

A: And who was in your home?

F: What?

A: People in your home- your house, family members. Who were there?

F: I..., ur...my, my husband have been died, *il y a* ...about 10 years...yes.

A: So it's just you and your children now?

F: Now, just me and my children.

A: Ok.

F: Yes.

A: As a child now, urm, Francine

F: *Oui,* Yes.

A: Were you in in Moka or did you live somewhere else?

F: At Reduit.

A: At Reduit, not very far.

F: Yes, not so far.

A: Urm, can we come, ur, to the languages you were using at home? With family members, as a child

and eventually when you, when you married?

F: When my children are ...

A: young

F: young ...I ...I use a bit French...but Creole

A: Creole mostly?

F: Creole, yes, yes.

A: And when you were a child?

F: ...Creole.

A: Creole.

F: Yes, Creole.

A: Ok, good. And, urm, what about when you were watching movies or when you were reading books? What languages would that be?

F: French.

A: French?

F: ...I ...I prefer French.

A: You refer French?

F: Uhun.

A: So you feel more confident speaking French?

F: Yes. More confident, yes. Uhun.

A: Yeah, again I'm thinking of you as a child and eventually a...a married woman, or may be, um, when you were at school also

F: Yes.

A: ur, what were the languages that you were using?

F: Sometimes English, sometimes French but more oftenly Creole.

A: More of Creole?

F: Yes, yes.

A: Yes?

F: Uhun.

A: Do you recall your, urm, your school days? When you were at school?

F: Yes, a bit...Were...I ...I've many friends...be because I ...I...I think I am ... popular...I think I am.

Appendix xiii: Extract from interview 1 with Mala to demonstrate shift from English to Creole

Switching to Creole for the interview (Note: English version of Creole utterances have been inserted)

M: Ur….(long pause) you know our first language is mother tongue this ur all you know… maybe all… all people in Mauritius talk talk in this this language but but some…(pause) some ur how how I tell-

A: If you want to speak Creole, you want to speak in French you speak.

M : OK, li kler. Mo kontan fer li inpe an angle pou mo gagn li si (slight laugh). OK OK, pa fer nanien. *[Ok, it's clear. I like to do it a bit in English so that I get it too. (slight laugh) Ok never mind.*/ Ok, it's clear. I like to speak English so that I improve. Ok never mind.]

A : Feel comfortable.

M : Yes yes. Si dizon dizon ena enn kiken enn dimoun pe kominik avek mwa an angle mo mo mo santi mwa bien pou mo kapav koz an angle. OK ? *[If as if as if a person communicates with me in English, I I I feel good to be able to speak English. OK ?*/ Let's say, if someone speaks to me in English, I should feel comfortable responding in English.]

A: So you think it's important to communicate with others who- if they address you in English,

M: Yes.

A: You should (emphasis) speak in English?

M: Yes.

A: Is that something you are feeling now or-

M: ein…

A: you realised before?

(pause)

M : (repeating) Is that something you realise…

A: Sa bezwin ou bizin kominik an an an Angle avek kikenn aster la ou pe ou pe realiz sa ou bien se enn zafer ou ti realize lontan me sinpleman ou pann fer li. Aster ou pe- [Do you feel this need to communicate in English now or had you felt it before but are capable of doing it only now ?]

M : non- [No.]

A : Ou senti ou kav fer li ? [You felt you could do it ?]

M : Non mo senti–se aster ki koumadir aster ki mo panse mmm… ki mo ti bizin fer li avan- *[No. I feel– It's now that as if I think mmm…that I should have done it before.* / No. I feel– It's now that I feel I should have done it earlier.]

Appendix xiv: Classroom description for each participant

Preety's classroom

All walls exhibit charts and children's work; print rich environment

- Teaching programme in English; goals for different domains stated
- Children's works: name of child and activity written in English
- Weather chart (ready -made) in English
- Animal chart in English
- Day of the week written on blackboard in English
- Colour chart in English
- Food corner with food packages (ready-made): English and French
- Ready made posters: seasons, road safety etc in English
- Days of the week in English
- Welcome to Ladybird pre-primary school in English
- Label for door and window: one in English and one in French

Francine's classroom

- Book corner
- Kitchen corner
- Furniture to store resources/materials
- Furniture for soft toys
- Walls exhibit children's works; labelled in French mostly: "peinture, collage, coloriage, dessins libre"
- Two languages used on worksheet: e.g. "group work collage *'fleur'* (flower)"
- Instructions in English on children's worksheet: "colour the circle red and the square blue"
- Ready made poster (advert) in English
- Weekly plan in English
- Alphabet chart in French

Jyotee's classroom

- Print rich environment: All exhibits in English
- Charts: number, alphabets, colours, weather
- Words cards: days of the week
- Worksheets: instructions written in English: "Patterning using big and small shapes", "a red cardinal"
- Reading corner: all books in English
- Work plan: English

Sandy's classroom

- Different corners: construction, computer, dress up, writing, reading mat. Each corner indicated by a mobile indicating objectives of the corner.
- On walls:

  - Children's work
  - School mission statement
  - Worksheets: "What do you do at school? With bubbles to quote what each child said (written in English, French or Creole according to language used by each child; only 1 child appears to have spoken Creole); worksheets illustrating "Who you play with at school?" Children's drawings and children's words quoted on his/her worksheet as s/he described the drawing.
  - Birthday chart: names, pictures of children and dates for each child
  - Mind map on things we need to have a party (appears to reflect what was said during the brainstorming session)
  - Chart of good manners (entitled "How does your garden grow".)
  - Chart with class essential agreements (do's and don'ts)
  - Chart with days of the week
  - Labelled picture cards with arrows indicating: Tomorrow, Today, Yesterday.
    Used to refer to activities they have done on the eve/will do on the day just after attendance.
  - Big painting hanging : collaborative task labelled in English, French (translated version) to indicate what each child painted.
  - Learner profile: each item is defined and illustrated with a picture.
  - Colour names.

Mala's classroom:

- Two rooms in a rented house; divided into two sections: nursery and kindergarten
- One room subdivided into different corners; corners are tight; little space to manoeuvre
- Writing corner: small tables and chairs
- Reading corner: bookshelf with Kreol, English and French books or trilingual books (including story in English, Bhojpuri and Kreol)
- Shop corner: assortment of old food wrappings/boxes
- Shelves with food packaging/boxes or old toys, puzzles, building blocks/ resources
- Computer corner: one computer in a tight spot on a table
- One filing cabinet with paper etc
- A few drawing of children on wall. On these, ad verbatim extracts of conversation between teacher and child who describes drawing.
- Green corner: next to the door with a plywood separation with some plants in pots
- Yard: small, poor maintenance; no room to play
- PE done in nursery while teacher brings her kids to the kindergarten side

Chantal's classroom:

- Print on walls: Paintings of children, number cards (big), letter cards (big), days of the week; nursery rhyme in French [Chantal uses letters and numbers for both English and French lessons.]
- Predominance of print in French;
- Some worksheets with instructions in English: "Draw three big circles"; vocabulary with pictures: car, ball, boat. On some sheets, children have written: "a girl" under the picture.
- Big Bristol sheets depicting post office on which "Post Office is written"

Appendix xv: Observation schedule template for classroom observation

Teacher _____	Session _____	Date _____	
Language used	**Purpose**	**Teaching strategy**	**Notes**
- French	- Instructions	-Teacher led	- Frequency with which language is used
- Creole	- Communication	- Interactive	- Teacher's stance/ attitude while using the language etc
- English	- Medium of instruction	- Activity based	
- Other	- etc		

Appendix xvi: Sample reworked observation schedule 1 for Preety

Observation schedule 1: Preety

Teacher : Preety	Session: 1	Date: Thursday 16.2.12	Time: 9.05-11.15 a.m
Language used	**Purpose**	**Teaching strategy**	**Notes**
Creole	-for informal talk during free play or while children have their meal -for casual talk (about matters not related to tasks set) -to answer queries children have regarding the task - to comment on children's work or behaviour (e.g. that children have already forgotten what had been taught earlier.) -to bring children back to order -sing songs	-no intervention during free play; teachers do not intervene unless required	Observation conducted during the morning; different activities were carried out during that period. The use of different languages and the purposes for using these were noted. Children's language use: they use Creole to initiate conversations and to respond to teachers who may be addressing them in French. Teachers communicate with each other and with parents in Creole. More French songs than Creole and English songs

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Language used	Purpose	Teaching strategy	Notes
French	- to switch from free play to formal teaching; children asked to tidy up, line up for attendance, say prayers.	- instructions given	- French is used as children go through the morning routine and are given instructions to: tidy up, line up for attendance, say prayers.
	- informal conversations - sing songs - to comment on children's work	- conversational	- While teachers speak French, pupils respond in Creole
	- for informal talk not related to task given		
	- to talk about matters of importance (e.g. health and hygiene: what they had for breakfast; commenting on healthy food choices; whether they had a shower/brushed their teeth willingly)		
	-talk about upcoming festival	- questioning by teacher	

Language used	Purpose	Teaching strategy	Notes
French	-children are told to walk on the line, run, walk etc	- instructions given	
	-to switch to next session: tell children to line up for toilet, keep chairs, get their lunch bags etc and after eating, to keep their bags, and line up to go outside	- instructions given	
	-grouping children according to age	- instructions given	
	-setting tasks for each; telling children to bring and distribute stationary	- instructions given	
	-telling children how to go about task (e.g. write day of the week, write name, get name tag, how to carry out task etc)		

Language used	Purpose	Teaching strategy	Notes
French	- support child who cannot write day of week	- spell word	- the day of the week is written in English (Thursday) but spelt in French
	- checking knowledge	- questioning (what is the colour of the circle or other shape.)	
	- casual talk about task to individual child (e.g. what to draw, to make it nice etc)	- conversational	

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Appendix xvii: Extract from interview 1 with Sandy

S: OK. Pre-school I was in ur in an English medium pre-school. That was the first one that was established ur in my neighbourhood when I used to live in Vacoas. (Pause) I was really urm (pause) as far as I can recall, it was an amazing experience How much I grasped from it urm (pause) don't really know. I know that from there my parents have always ur (pause) had this laissez faire approach so... basically... what...not what every...we were the odd ones out I'd say ur...(pause) most of the things that parents would allow, we were allowed much more so that is playing in the mud ur what would it be? Urm... Going shopping my mum would never hold my hand. I would wander around but she is she is the one who will be supervising, like keeping an eye but I thought I was lost and at the same time I can hear, " Oh, I can see you over there just come to me." So this.... really started to urm (long pause) "susciter mon interet" (arouse my interest) let's say... about children are fascinating, parents and and the grooming and then and and so on... So that's for pre-school ur... now I come to my family of five children...so mind you I'm in the middle.

A: Ok

S: The two elders were always like the parents and the two youngest were the naughty ones, "I'll tell mummy for you." And I'm the little mummy now and I've always had this responsibility, because I was always in the middle it's quite of a balance because you never know where you were really urm so I guess I decided I would be the second mummy of the house...(laughs)

A: A role for yourself.

S:(laughing) ur.... mmm so this was ur let's see primary...OK...primary... mmm I had beautiful teachers that I had and amazing, an amazing impact on on me, on who I wanted to be....at the same time, I was never confident, like never had self confidence, ur I mean...(long pause) oh I can...recall this one time when....I... (pause) I had a teacher who was maybe in year three or year four... no year four, she was amazing year five year six ... in year three I had urm a teacher she was ur Franco-Mauritian, I think this is why I do...not am scared but I really tend to not have to mingle with...without being biased..I don't know how far is this relevant but...so she she started teaching because she was covering for another teacher.... (pause) and... she was just...just mean...that were it was like everything would have been me because I'm a chatterbox.

A: OK

S: I'm a real chatterbox and ... she was teaching something about....(pause) mathematics...I think it was multiplication...there was the (pause) the board was full of activities and it was about- you know at that time when you just write it and you'll do it and complete it at home.... (pause) urm...

A: [ ]

S: and....(pause)...ur....she...I don't know at what stage she told me to come in front of the class and was just randomly...and I I knew there was not a good relationship between us so to speak....urm...since then...I started to not to-I was terrified like, not terrified of school but...(long pause) I don't know... there was something that triggered ur from that stage...from that urm from that time, where I started losing confidence....where I...ur... not I disliked school; I liked school but it was for other reasons. Before I loved going to school: to work and learn new things and from that it was.. (pause) about going and... instead of, like to me it was: If I didn't go to school, my friends would be upset not to see me. (laughs) So, tell me about egocentric!

A & S: (laugh)

Appendix xviii: Extract from Jyotee's colour-coded transcript for analysis

Jyotee

Transcript 1a

Date: 28.2.12

==Experience of home & own schooling== ==Early teaching experiences== ==TEP== ==Teaching experience approach & attitude towards language==

A: So Jyotee, this is about your own language experiences. I explained to you how er what the study is about and er the type of information I would like to get...As I mentioned just now, I'll ask you to go far back and try to...may be tell me a bit about yourself because I don't know much about you.

J: Ok. Urm ==I'm Mrs Jyotee.== Urm I'm ==just joined school here since 8 years== and ur...it's one of ==my friends who told me== that you know at Jardin d'Enfants they are looking for a teacher. And I use to work at Sunny Hills and ur it was a very nice school over there and ur ==I used to do only French there-== only French- and I use to work with the 4 to 5 years old children. We used to prepare them for the primary schools and ...one day I just I just came here...I I I was going to then my friend just called me in the morning and told me, "You know Jyotee, go to Jardin d'Enfants. It's a very nice school. You will like it because...I ==I wanted just to change, to have a change, to look for for something ...not something better but I I wanted to.. to... to... teach in English. I was used...I was looking for an opportunity to just to teach English because I'm really ...I really like this language. I I use to to speak French but English I I really wanted to have this opportunity to teach in English.== So, when I came here, I know it was a bilingual ur they use English and French medium here and I came there was no English teacher and I when I met Marie Anne and we we had a talk but and then she...she told me urm, "Can I have ...Can I see your urm your certificates? Said, "I didn't bring any certificates. I just came here to see see if you need a teacher or not." And we started laughing and say, "Ok, are you coming back tomorrow?" I said, "Yes, I'm interested and I'm so so happy to be ...part of your...ur of your school, so let's see." Then I I came here the next day, I came back and I gave all my certificates and then they called me on ...on the 20...23rd of December. They called me and told me that "Ok you can join in January." And now I have I have been doing I have been ==working at Sunny Hills for 10 years!==

A: Oh my God!

J: I just came here and see if they are going to have this job. I I was not very sure I was going to have this this job. Now I don't know what to do. I...I just go and and see my Director and say, "You know I'm so sorry. I just I just went there just to see if they're going to take me." Then she say, "You're leaving?" I say, "Yes, I'm leaving." (Brief pause. Laughs.) You can imagine, I've been working there 10 years- 10 years- since she has started her new school. We started with 2 kids over there, two kids in a class.

A: So you grew with the school.

J: We grew with the school and ur I... I I I really urm how I can say that? Ur I can speak French also?

A: Yes, of course.

J: "Comme si j'ai j'ai ...j'ai organise l'ecole." (As if I had...I I had set up the school.)I organise everything: every corners, every classroom and everything.

A: So you created, in a way, that school.

J: Yes yes yes. And together with the with the director, with Mrs ur Appadoo. We created the school and I was very happy there. But the thing that I wanted to change, to have a change just to teach English. English was just in my mind, you know. And then she said, "Ok, if you want to go, go ahead. I'm not going to...to to prevent you from having this opportunity because you were looking for that opportunity." And then the kids were the kids we were having were the they were working class people, you know, speaking Creole and French, very less of French not not English at all and ur ...and then I I came here, we started. So so there was only ur 10 to 12 children in one class; me and Mrs Ducres, you know, the French teacher we were working together and I use to do ur half an hour of English ... everyday...everyday. So...so...we started and then one day ur the parents, the parents here, asked if we are not going to have any English school because their kids are going to Summerside, Muswell primary school and so on. So Christelle, the director, the second director- we have got two directors here, Marie-Anne and Christelle- and ur this time they they thought about creating a new class- an English class- so that's from now, 8 ur 7 years I have been teaching the in the English section and ur it's like this. But for my childhood, I must say, school was not like this (referring to her school/classroom); very different. I used to go... to the school- I don't know if you you did the same thing like me- ...we had a bench, just bench and we sit there, the teacher came and she will sing a little song, she will write a,b,c,d on the whiteboard with chalk. She will write a,b,c,d.

We'll sing the song a,b,c,d, we are going to write 1,2,3 up to 10, we are going to recite this and then, at

12, I will go back home. I'll go back home. I'll go back home and eat and sleep. And the next day I've done it. Everyday it was like this. There was no playing, no nothing; only reading- reading the books and sitting. We were reading this: I'm sitting, I'm standing, I'm walking, I'm drinking. Ur pre- school was like that. There was no game, no corners, no books, nothing. Nothing. And ur...there was no paper work, no paper work, no ...nothing, just playing. We were playing a lot. I remember playing- how we say- circle games, playing rat, cats and rat games, lots of games we were playing. I learnt there and ur...I used to have one friend, one... one friend.

Appendix xix: Extracts of final and draft versions of Mala's narrative to contrast approaches in composing the narrative

Home & school: defining language use

Having been brought up and lived in rural areas, namely Vieux Grand Port, Montagne Longue and New Grove, Mala has never had opportunities nor felt the need to speak English at home or in the neighbourhood since Kreol has always been predominantly spoken. Schooling, be it pre primary, primary or secondary, did not alter this tendency. Mala's schooling does not appear to have had a significant impact upon her as she at times finds it hard to retrieve memories of those days. Nevertheless, her reminiscences allow her to put forth the essence of her language experiences. Lack of opportunities to speak English and the use of a traditional teaching approach did not encourage her, a person who is shy by nature, to dare express herself in English, a language deemed foreign.

"At pre primary school, I spoke to the teacher in Kreol and the teacher spoke: half French, half Kreol. I remember just repeating *a b c d e f g h*[98] and *un deux trois quatre cinq*[99] after the teacher. There was only parrot learning[100]. It was boring and too tiring. Teaching was not play based like it is now."

Original	Transliteration	Translation
When the teacher spoke ...*la plipar ditan Miss ti pe koz Franse. Seki mo rapel, Angle si me selman telman, touletan kan mo ti ena kesion-*	When the teacher spoke... *most of the time the teacher spoke French. What I remember; English also but when I had the questions - I wasn't so*	When the teacher spoke...*the teacher spoke French most of the time. I recall that she spoke English also but every time I knew the answer - I wasn't*

Kreol		
mo pa sa kantite malinn la, me mo ti konn bann kesions- me mo pa ti kapav reponn li an Kreol. Telman zot ti pe koz Franse, mo per telman li pas bon, me kan Mis inn dir lerla mo trouv li bon. Telman Mis ti pe koze koze koze koze, mo pann kapav, mo pa dir: Me depi ler mo inpe koumsa. Mo ena sa krint la dan mo latet: Ki li pou dir? Pa kone kou- ma li pou koz avek nou. Ki langaz li pou koz avek nou? Nou kapav dir li la mwatie. Mo pe kontan koz Angle parski qui sa enn it. Mo pe kontan koz Angle parski qui sa enn pratik me parfwa nou pa nou pa resi gagn li. Mo pense ki nou pena ase pratik. La plipar di tan ti eksplik an Franse. Pa ti tande sa Angle la.	*intelligent but I knew the questions- I cannot not say it in Kreol. They spoke so much French that I was afraid to say it in case it was wrong, but when the teacher gave the answer, I saw it was good. The teacher was talking all the time I could not say it. The teacher was speaking speaking speaking, I could not, I did not say it.* *I'm still a bit like that. I have a fear in my head: What will he say? I don't know how he will talk to us. What language will he use? We can say half of it. I like speaking English because it is a way to practice but sometimes we can't say it.I believe we do not have enough practice. Most of the time the explanation was in French. I did not hear English.*	*so intelligent but I knew the answers- I could not say them in Kreol. The teacher spoke French mostly so I was afraid in case it was wrong. But when the teacher gave the answer, I realised it was correct. The teacher was speaking so much that I couldn't say it.* *I'm still a bit like that. I have an innate fear that makes me apprehensive about what he will say, the language he will use and the way he will talk to me. I can express myself only partly in English...I like speaking English because it al-lows me to practice but sometimes I'm not able to convey the message. I believe I do not have enough practice. Explanations were given in French. English was hardly ever used.*
Commenting on the teaching approach that prevailed in those days, Mala highlights the passive role imposed upon pupils.	Commenting on the teaching approach that prevailed in those days, Mala highlights the passive role imposed upon pupils.	Commenting on the teaching approach that prevailed in those days, Mala highlights the passive role imposed upon pupils.
Ti ena zis teachers ki ti koumadir santre la. Zot ti pe ekrir mem, li eksplike mem. Nou ti pe asize, nou ti pe ekoute.	*It was only the teachers who were at the centre of the class. They were writing all the time, explaining all the time. We were just sitting and listening.*	*Only the teachers were at the centre of the class. They were writing and explaining all the time. We merely sat and listened to them.*

Appendix xx: Cross-case thematic analysis grid

	Sandy	Preety	Jyotee	Mala	Chantal
Parents **Comments:** **Determine language choices/habits; establish purpose for learning a language (educational mostly) Some parents have a more prominent role than others and this appears to establish the path to be taken with regard to the language: realize its importance or merely view it as a subject (academic function).**	Laissez- faire within boundaries **Mum:** not proficient in Eng yet supportive (meetings with teachers, buying books); friendly; created opportunities to learn English (alternate Eng/Fr speaking days at home, incentive through possible trips to Australia) **Dad:** strict; proficient in both Eng and Fr; lawyer, not involved	Father died when she was young **Mum** who passed La Bourse exam and elder brother helped her with her studies	Spoke Kreol with parents both parents speak French **Father** valued education as a means towards social uplift; highly involved in children's education: encouraged them to learn Eng and French: made them listen to the news on TV everyday and practice reading aloud like newscaster; made them write a lot and would dictate short texts and correct	Mother had passed away; lived with father and step mother until std VI when aunt took her away and thus she pursued schooling Spoke Kreol only at home	Spoke French with both parents. Parents wanted her to become a secretary.

	mistakes in orthography.	
	Dad was the drive to learn languages in order to communicate in language in language in which they were addressed This influence still strongly felt as is seen in her drive to improve in English and learn Hindi + way she exhorts son to learn Spanish	
in studies much yet expects good results from kids		
Both parents promote reading(compulsory) among their kids as a means to learn the English language		

Social /linguistic background	Mum- Franco Mtian	Lived in **Curepipe**	Lived in extended	Lived in **rural** area;	Lived on a sugar es-
Comments:	**origin:** French &	(urban) prior to	family in Curepipe- a	Kreol predominant in	tate; spoke Kreol with
Family background	Kreol (father- servant's	father's demise.	**multi-lingual space:**	family and	siblings and cousins
as well as	son with whom mother	Normally spoke Kreol	Grandmother and	environment	but never English
environment	eloped); not proficient	but family is	aunts spoke Bhojpuri;		
determine language	in English but refuses	educated; visited by	parents and siblings		
that is spoken and	to learn from daughter;	uncles and cousins	Kreol; Mother and		
attitude towards	siblings settled in	from UK and speak	brother Italian as they		
language(s)	Australia- may have	English	had worked in Italy for		
There are also	had plans to migrate		a few years		
unforeseen events	there too: motive to	Shift to **Dagotiere**			
that impact on	make children learn	(rural) after Father's			
language use (e.g.	English	demise. New			
demise/career move		environment: more			
of one parent	**Dad:** studied in	exposure to French but			
followed by shift to	France; Lawyer (may	speak Kreol			
another region)	be	predominantly;			
	reason for high	English hardly spoken			
	academic	; spoke Bhojpuri with			
	expectations from	grandmother			
	children); **parents**				
	were teachers and				

own Dad rector; spoke English at home, proficient in both Eng and Fr; code switches acc. to mood (his family background appears favourable to academic/linguistic achievement)					
Pedagogy at schools attended **Comments:** **Participants' lived experiences as learners allow them to gauge effectiveness of teaching approaches. From their vantage as a teacher now, they are better able to assess these; they have also**	Pre primary: Tumble Down- focus on holistic development of children v/s purely academic- makes connections with Summerside Primary: strong academic focus, teacher centered with a few exceptions: phonics, games, storytelling, role play	Pre primary: modeled on primary schooling (content and approach- drills etc); lack of basic resources Primary and Secondary: traditional approach; translating in French prevalent; academic focus *(Post secondary: more theoretical than practical)*	Pre primary: drills, untrained teacher, no games or appropriate resources Primary: mixed experience- depending on teacher and school (at Flacq, teacher taunts her because she comes from town and is black) Secondary: mixed experience depending	Pre primary: drills as opposed to play based as now. Primary and second-ary: audio lingual and grammar translation approaches; predominance of teacher talk; no opportunities for learner participation Primary, Secondary and post secondary:	Pre primary: replica of content and method seen at primary level; untrained teacher; audio lingual Primary and secondary: extensive use of translation or explanations were in French Mixed experience depending on teacher (degree of support)

derived important lessons about teacher attitude and role of learners in teaching and learning process; this explains why they all unanimously vouch for the importance of placing learners at the centre and adopting teaching methods that are based on their needs	etc Secondary: traditional approach: drills, exercises Sandy critical towards approach in both schools Tertiary: placing teacher and learners at same level; being who you are	on teacher	medium of instruction (Eng and French a barrier to understanding)
Use of English in schools attended	Pre primary: English medium; French spoken only with maids	Pre primary: audio lingual approach Primary: English	Pre primary: repeated after teacher without understanding
		Pre primary: rote learning without any consideration whether understanding is	Pre primary: taught key vocab, alphabets and

Comments:					numbers in Eng. Audio
English was hardly ever presented to learners as a means of communication. Rather it was viewed merely as a subject to be learnt/ in which they would be assessed so led to rote learning rather than developing communicative skills. While some participants are able to develop a love and an interest in the language, others are alienated from it and struggle whilst using it. All participants express an appreciation of	Primary and Secondary: English taught as a subject rather than a language; communicative aspect brought out only by foreign teacher who also teaches phonics. More exposure to Eng. As it is medium of instruction at secondary level and also thru study of literature. Sandy sees language as culture; develops a love of letters	taking place Primary: limited use of English despite being in a high achieving school- only textbooks were in English Secondary: more use of English for instructional purposes; visual aids in textbook help understand but French is deemed more easy, English read in literature texts is foreign/meaningless. English never presented as a means of communication.	spoken only in Eng class; translation into French; traditional approach Secondary: develops a love for English due to one teacher who encourages communication in Eng as opposed to other teachers	Primary and Secondary: English hardly ever used. No consideration for shy students or those who had difficulties understanding. Shyness and lack of practice led to lack of confidence when speaking English. Lack of vocab.	lingual Primary and Secondary: Predominance of French though Eng was supposed to be medium if instruction. Only 1 teacher at primary school encouraged them to speak English and herself spoke English. Secondary: more English used as it was the medium of instruction and students were told to speak Eng however little support given to those who had

teachers who present English as a means of communication and involve them in the use of it.	difficulties to understand
	Isabelle: good relationship with students, encouraged them to speak and participate; did group work. Always spoke Eng. On the whole notes that primary teachers were able to give indiv. attention to the students.
	Jocelyn (primary) teacher recalled more for her caring attitude than for her pedagogical approach.
Teachers to emulate Comments: A number of factors determine whether teachers are viewed as models. These are (one or more of these) their attitude towards students and the type of relationship of relationship fostered, their learner centered and participatory teaching strategies, their personality. The language issue is not necessarily a	Miss Simla: friendly, well dressed and pretty.
	Gabby (primary) and Miss Naina (secondary): due their teaching approach: participatory, encouraged students to speak the language be it English or French. Miss Naina's supportive attitude, personality and Eng. Accent also a great attraction to Jyotee. Jyotee grateful to Gabby for her acquired fluency in French- helped her Pre
	Mariel, Helen, Rosalind (primary) and Beatrice (secondary): friendly attitude, learners centered, different pedagogy from the rest; involved students in the learning (read chapter they wished to); fun approach (games, role play, storytelling); Beatrice gave Sandy attention her Mum could not give her; democratic in her approach.

|		
consideration but those who were fluent or who encouraged students to use the target language were seen in a favourable light.	Univ. lecturers: blend of approaches and personality but all 3 exhorting students to be who they are: had a great impact on Sandy's search for identity. More democratic ideals: Sandy sees teacher placing herself on same level as students. Reinforces Sandy's conviction that traditional approaches need not be adhered to. More in line with what she perceives to be the right approach.	save her face amidst racially discriminating teacher and classmates at Flacq. Both teach-ers struck her by their implementation of approaches that were different from the rest of the teachers. Gabby sang songs which was great motivation to attend school. She also gave the children sweets. Miss Mira, her lecturer during her Teacher's Diploma course: need to make the child central consideration; make abstract concepts concrete.

Teachers who are counter models Comments: Teachers earn negative appraisal for a number of reasons, namely their attitude, relationship towards students and their pedagogical approach.	Rachael: terrifying, unfriendly, teacher centered, strong academic focus, teacher on a pedestal, saps out Sandy's confidence. Haunts Sandy till now and makes her determined to be her foil.	pre primary teacher: due to inappropriate teaching approach. Male teachers: Mr Sulliman, Gopee and Roy due to corporal punishment and atti-tude: harsh and brutal. But Preety concedes that she has perhaps learnt something from them: not to be like them. She herself is the opposite.	primary teacher: due to inappropriate teaching approach (boring). Mr Gilbert: racial discrimination; favoured the whites; taunts Jyotee about her ability to speak French.	Pre primary teacher: due to inappropriate teaching approach (boring, tiring and did not understand anything being taught- language was a barrier) No specific teachers mentioned but on the whole, comments on the way teacher talk dominated without any consideration whether students could understand- especially shy students like Mala. Same situation prevailing at tertiary level (tutors).	Pre primary teacher: due to inappropriate teaching approach Secondary school: no specific teacher but comments on how there was no consideration regarding whether students had understood when Eng was spoken- especially shy students like Chantal. Makes Chantal realize that lack of teacher support can be detrimental.

Post secondary course (ECE) Comments:					
Courses followed for professional devt were deemed to be too theoretical for the majority of participants. **Being in the field on placement allowed them to develop their teaching skills and equip them better.** Sandy is an exception; her stint at the university appeared to have exposed her to a teaching philo she espoused and	Followed course in Australia; presented with alternative way of teaching; built up teaching repertoire; tutors shared their passion with students; in school she sees teacher lying on the floor playing with children: all this in line with her own teaching philosophy- sees this as a validation of her beliefs about teaching (as opposed to the dominant models she had been exposed to during her own schooling.) Later when she	Felt viewed as inferior as she was following courses from a private institution. Emphasis on theoretical know-how so lacks practical knowledge. While in the field on placement learnt the job- got the practical know-how; Learnt by observing teachers. Following fateful visit of Teacher Supervisor she was able to work as a teacher rather than as a helper; allowed her to learn by doing. Realised that she loved teaching children.	Mentions lecturer Miss Mira only who had a great influence on her; taught her the need to place children at the centre and make their needs the most important consideration. "Though I have learnt a lot from courses for professional development, at times, I feel the content is not really relevant to our professional needs. Teachers **know** what they need because they are the ones dealing with the children."	Teacher Edu courses enabled her to be more exposed to English and use it more often; also learnt how to develop a prog and plan work according to areas of learning as per NCF yet feels there are things that cannot be implemented- like compel children to speak English. These Courses too theoretical and focused on 2nd & 3rd languages rather then MT while courses dispensed by Association helped develop practical skills to manage a preschool	Of her pre service course in Reunion she points out that her tutors helped her overcome her shyness to an extent. Courses ollowed locally too theoretical and did not equip her with practical knowledge.

	followed Proficiency and Certificate courses, she was more exposed to Eng which was the medium of instruction and was also taught how to teach English. Her teaching started to alter as she adopted these strategies. Difficult at first but amount of English used in class increased. In-service workshops and short courses further expand her repertoire of strategies and be spontaneous/ flexible in teaching.	
reinforced her beliefs about how teaching should be.		

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Mentors					
Comments:

Mentors, either official or perceived as such by participants, had valuable contribution to professional devt of participants. Since they were in the field and the type of advice and guidance given was related to practical aspects of teaching, their help was considered to be highly relevant and valued as such. | Officially assigned mentor taught her to be firm with children (overcome her dread of becoming another Rachael). Still seeks her advice. Colleague, Rosa, who has 13 yrs of experience. Recognises the importance of sharing and collaboration in the workplace. | Meera ("like a God"): under her guidance during her placement developed teaching skills, learnt to plan and carry out activities. HOWEVER Meera did not provide Preety with alternate approach to language use: spoke French and Kreol predominantly - same model of use Preety had been exposed to so far.

Asha: colleague at Arsenal who taught her survival skills- dealing with parents and managing in a | No mentor as such but mentions that she is currently learning from her colleague Mrs Ducres who is doing in house training on French system of eaching - learning about manipulation; sees this as additional training.

Learns from everyone | Mrs Sushilla, secretary of the Association. Gave her opportunity to join the profession, and follow courses for professional development; viewed as model for teaching. Also encourages her to speak English. | Ex Director who exhorted her to constantly be on the look out and innovate – habit she has developed and advice she passes on to her colleagues now. Mother is her model and source of inspiration : her love of children and lively teaching approach as opposed to traditional teaching. |

difficult environment.
Asha encourages her
to take up new
ventures like MCA
prog. Sense of
achievement as she
is chosen out of three
colleagues. Also works
with PTA for
improvement of school
and welfare of children
and is congratulated
for work.
Good working
relationship and close
collaboration while
teaching as well as
new strategies learnt
from Asha helped
Preety develop her self
confidence.

School contexts	Administration:	Administration/ Colleagues:	Previous school:	Administration:	Administration: Colleagues:
Comments: context, here administrative and relationship with colleagues, is an important enabling or disabling factor. Teachers plough ahead successfully (according to their own terms- their view of teaching/ learning- rather than in terms of how effective is their approach) when the school policy is in line with their personal philosophy and when they have a	School policy (inquiry approach, experiential learning) with regard to teaching in line with her own philosophy. Yet since school is English medium, she finds it difficult to conciliate Eng with Mother Tongue. Yet admits that with this age group she has some freedom to use mother tongue. Also she shares school's belief in multiple intelligences and the need to cater for holistic development of children.	Not mentioned explicitly but testimonials show that her work is appreciated by administration and parents.	She set up everything as they started from scratch + neither she nor the director understood/realized the need to speak English. Thus she had maintained the habit of translating from French to Eng as she had been taught herself. However realizes that the children's home environment would not necessarily allow extensive use of Eng. Current school: Administration/ Colleagues: Adopts French system as	School policy and Mala's philosophy are similar; Children's rights of expression and therefore use of mother tongue seen as being essential. This is what Mala herself had experienced as a learner: need to understand and be understood. Frayed resources and infrastructural limitations do not appear to pose a problem for Mala. Admits she owes her growth to the Association thanks to courses dispensed,	Her philosophy is driven by ex director's advice.

supportive environment. Lack of support can be destabilising and feed uncertainty as in Sandy's case.	Colleagues: While she can still turn to a couple of colleagues for help/advice and she works well with Fran-coise, she feels like a misfit due her predilection for communicating in French and her more democratic attitude (laissez faire) towards children. This gives rise to uncertainty and lack of confidence in herself as a teacher. Even considers quitting the job.	used in school and teaches English; not told what/how to do so has freedom to teach as she believes to be effective. Learns more about French approach from colleague through in house training. Benefits from support of directors and all staff considered as equals; like a family. This motivates her to forge ahead and excel in what she does.	support of secretary. Need to consult members before implementing new approach.

Learners					
Chooses what best suits the child, so teaching must constantly evolve. I want my learners to be confident; they should be capable of taking ownership of their learning journey. I cannot impose my beliefs on them- uses inquiry approach, graded instruction and differentiated approach to language use with respect to child's L1- caters for individual needs. Can put aside planning and carry out activity of interest to the children.	Children determine language choices. Teaching is linked to their prior knowledge and experiences. Uses various strategies such as demonstration, gestures, concrete objects, songs, and stories to ensure comprehension.	dren determine language choice- use of medium varied according to school/ learner profile. In current school she shifts to English and uses communicative strategies. Differentiated approach as some children take more time to switch to English and it is important for her that children understand and are involved in the lesson. "Teaching is all about knowing our learners." Also learns from her learners- especially the native	Every child is my child. Child's background and developmental stage is important. Language use must not be disruptive and alienate children from new environment, i.e., school. Important to use MT. Learning must be contextualized and meaningful.	Adopts strategies that prove to be effective for language learning. Involves the children through fun activities and games, songs... Teacher as performer and entertainer. Always be innovative for the benefit of the children. Also learns from the children-native speakers.	

My comments: Learners are a central consideration- be it for language use or choice of teaching strategy. Though the aim is to teach English, focus is on communication and involving learners– hence the switch to other languages and the varying degree to which English is used by the different participants. **Democratic approach: learner**

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as teacher or learner to determine what is taught.	speakers.		
Turning points **Comments:** **Some participants** **have undergone** **distinct experiences** **that have led them** **to adopt alternate** **views of English** **and /or ELT. Other** **participants appear** **to have ploughed** **through to the point** **where they are at** **present gradually-** **reinforced previously** **held notion about** **teaching or all** **experiences they**	**Australia:** **1st visit**: showed a different function of the English language: communication as opposed to a subject. Notion of a language associated with a culture. Marks change in attitude: opens up to the language and practices speaking; shows off at school because she had been to another country and spoken Eng. New relationship with the language: loves it and wants to score	**Arsenal** marks Professional growth: develops self confidence-able to tackle parents, develops pedagogical know how, involved in other activities like improving schooling experiences for the children and participating in educational programme. Proud that children she worked with got admitted to good secondary schools.	**Maiba, child from** **Zimbabwe:** realized that use of language needs to be made concrete to facilitate understanding so used a lot of gestures/mimes to accompany her words. Always spoke English. Maiba's success in learning both Eng and French makes Jyotee convinced of that this approach can work.

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underwent led them gradually to currently upheld notion/ understanding of language use/ teaching/learning.

high grades in it; loves literature as it exposes her to varied uses of the language; also the motivation to go back to Australia. This desire to learn the language further has remained- life long learner. **2nd visit:** as a student; exposed to alternative way of teaching. Finds her notion of teaching validated. Growth in Australia also at personal level: self confidence in capacity and also accept and be who she is.

Experience	One school	Several schools	Three schools but in current school she teaches only English	one school	one school
Foreign influence	Teacher: Beatrice in primary school who introduces her to new approaches: role play, phonics, story telling Australia: use English in real communicative situations Australia: tutors and teacher in school she visits introduce her to alternative ways of teaching	Uncles and cousins from England: spoke English when they came on holiday	Primary school teacher Gabby from France; taught through songs which was highly motivating and effective. French system prevalent in school where she is currently working; it's the approach she has adopted.		TV educational programmes from which she learnt different teaching strategies
Comments: **Contact with foreign people or contexts have brought new understandings which were welcome and seen as being positive by all participants who are concerned. Preety's contact with English via relatives settled in the UK does not however have as powerful an impact as the other 3. Mala has never**					

experienced the "foreign" contact and her stance is somewhat nationalistic- the need to value Kreol as we would value Eng or Fr.					Drive to plough ahead, constantly innovate; on the look out for new ways of teaching; makes links between different levels of schooling; very dynamic in outlook
Attitude/personality **Comments:** **Character varies; most driven by determination** **Their past history does influence who they are today.**	Young, cheerful, bubbly; "a bit of everyone"; Lacks confidence; on an identity quest; at times uncertain about herself and her approach	Showed determination to learn from colleagues/ seniors; is now more confident and flexible in her approach.	Determined to forge ahead; shaped by and driven by her father's philosophy; desire to reach greater heights	Slow and steady; deep conviction in her approach/philosophy of language learning; displays much confidence in implementation of her approach She sees her plight as a learner reflected in her students and therefore determined they should not undergo what she did.	

Relationship with English: what the lge represents for them					
Comments: **To all except Sandy, English is an academic subject- a passport to social mobility. Sandy sees it as a tool for communicate and enjoys reading due to her love of letters and appreciation of other cultures- due to experiences such as travelling or encounters with others; Jyotee sees teaching it as a dream come true**	Initially a subject and presented as a passport to new country; became recognized as being a tool for communication; opens the door to new culture; developed a love of letters/ appreciates beauty of language; However also sees it as unnatural to use it in certain instances, e.g. with colleague, for children for whom it is not the MT; superior to Kreol	A subject to be studied for academic purposes; only time it was for real use was with uncles/cousins from abroad; read lit texts under compulsion as she had difficulties understanding Shakesperean lge but enjoyed listening to Eng. songs; teaching approach- extensive translation by teachers- reinforced distance with the language; more confident expressing herself/ fluent in French; admits her own lack of	Means to communicate; passport to a better future for herself and students; passion to learn and teach that language (father and Miss Naina's influence);	Important in our edu system and as a socio economic passport; makes effort to develop fluency but has always been a foreign language to her (way she was taught + was never used in her environment); Kreol not inferior to Eng	Important academic subject; not her MT; more at ease in French; English is a subject I teach. certain words in Eng that she does not know; teachers not considerate enough about shy students like her who may not have understood.

while Mala equates proficiency in English with being educated (social status). Their past has a great role in determining the relationship they have with the language.	proficiency; English has become more prominent in her classroom (NCF) due to policy and training courses at MIE; Eng cohabits with other lges in her classroom- has distinct use				Never uses traditional approach; Strategies need to evolve; cannot stagnate. Children must be aware that teacher is here to teach English; encourage learners to speak Eng- gradual transition to English; first arouse interest to acquire the language and then teach it; pre
View of teaching **Comments: Irrespective of their approach (translation, use of MT, use of English only etc) all participants make learners their central consideration in**	Being a good teacher is the convergence of different influences; investigating, comparing the old and new ways which represent different schools of thought: concept driven versus democratic learning; hasn't drawn conclusions yet;	Shift in teaching approach: translation prevalent earlier as she taught he way she had been taught and guided by Teacher Education Supervisors; now believes that children learn through play; instruction is graded: from oral to written;	Gradual shift from French to English and then uses only English; teaches through songs, rhymes, storytelling rhymes and conversations and provides a lot of exposure to English in authentic situations; speaks English the whole day; but works acc. to pace of child	Children must be understood and understand; must love children; abstract experiences must be made concrete (games, nursery rhymes and actions) code switches; teaches concepts in MT and adequate Eng for children to cope at primary school;	

choice of their approach. It is important that the children understand and be interested in the lesson. Also, some participants point out that it is necessary for teacher to love children to work in this field. Noted that their own experiences as learners have shaped their attitude and approach.	Democratic; should cater for different abilities and intelligences; participatory approach and discovery learning; need to adapt teaching acc. to interest, need and level of child; children need not be constrained- laissez faire but structured; no barrier between teacher and student- teacher can learn from children; yet uncertain- feels kids being treated like guinea pigs	readiness is important; resources used to provide concrete experiences to learners; language used determined by children- so that they can understand	as per school policy; provides concrete experiences. Believes in effectiveness of approach used in French system (manipulation, games etc); teacher must be cordial and friendly; children's feelings and needs central.	pri to lay foundation for further learning to be done at primary level; need to contextualize teaching through role play and use songs and use support like gestures and mimes; use of activity based approach; teaching should be lively- teacher as entertainer and performer; need for the pre primary teacher to be aware of what is taught and how at primary level to better prepare learners; all levels interlinked. Must love children. Teachers also can learn from children.

Appendix xxi: Turn it in report

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