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Exploring the language teacher's mind – helping student teachers see beneath the surface

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This article contributes to debates concerning the role of higher education (HE) in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). It summarises a range of distinctive features of HE and highlights a central challenge: the need to experiment with accessing and articulating teacher craft knowledge. Reference is made to literature discussing the complex and elusive nature of such craft knowledge and the difficulty of capturing it is acknowledged. It is maintained that the HE tutor should take the lead in such experimentation. The article then discusses a variety of ways in which this can be achieved along with references to fuller accounts. There follows a detailed description of a practical example in which student teachers are led through a cycle of experience and discussion focusing on the components of decision-making, including an attempt at articulation during the act of teaching.

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN TEACHER PREPARATION

Recent articles in the *Language Learning Journal* by Pachler and Field (2001) and Lawes (2002) are reminders of the ongoing debate in the UK about the appropriate division of roles in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Partnerships between higher education (HE) staff and school-based mentors. The development of alternative routes to teaching qualification such as the School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) schemes has further highlighted the need to identify the distinctive features of HE input. Despite differences in emphasis, common themes are beginning to emerge:

- providing a supportive ear which puts the student teacher at the centre of attention and activity away from the competing pressures of the school environment;
- exposing and challenging naive and unhelpful preconceptions about teaching, learning and languages;
- providing access to a conceptual framework from which student teachers can develop the guiding principles necessary to develop their practice;
- establishing a vision of what practice can and could be like as opposed to an acceptance of what practice has actually become within a particular time and context, i.e. supporting the emergence of professional goals which allow for the development of 'best possible' practice.

Underpinning these is the central, challenging role of helping student teachers to access the multifarious knowledge base of experienced teachers – a role which warrants further discussion and experiment.

THE CHALLENGE OF SCHOOL-BASED TRAINING

A salient feature of recent reforms to ITE in the UK is the emphasis on time spent in schools working alongside experienced teachers. This model assumes that extended practice with the support of experienced practitioners will improve ability. It is a reaction against 'theory into practice' models of teacher training which are seen to have dominated in the 70s and 80s and to have been ineffectual in meeting the practical demands of teaching[1]. The desire to establish a distinctive knowledge base for education to supplement subject matter knowledge had led to the development in universities of primarily 'top-down' approaches: educationalists in HE institutions provided student teachers with declarative knowledge about educational and psychological principles, and/or 'trained' them in skills essential to a particular method based on research or reasoning. The students were then expected to implement this knowledge and these skills in practice. Perhaps inevitably, such approaches led to a 'deficit' culture, with polarisation of HE tutors and teachers: HE tutors blamed the teachers for failing to understand the issues or to implement the methodology properly, whilst teachers blamed the HE tutors for being too

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far removed from reality. Language teaching perhaps exemplifies this mistaken belief in scientifically based methodology as a panacea for pedagogy, with its history of enthusiastic lurches forward and disillusioned regression to traditional forms of practice. Interestingly, whilst apparently trying to break HE's hegemony in ITE by criticising its perceived 'theory into practice' cycle, the UK government through its recent reforms appears to be replacing this with its own brand of 'theory into practice'. Trainee teachers are expected to work alongside experienced professionals, but all are expected to deliver a curriculum and implement a methodology dictated by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). These methodological prescriptions take the form of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the more recently introduced and (as yet) voluntary Key Stage 3 Strategy[2], and perhaps in particular the Modern Foreign Languages National Curriculum Programme of Study, which clearly specifies important aspects of methodology such as use of the target language. Add to these the competency-based assessment of both trainee and experienced teachers and an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection procedure which measures 'good teaching' and 'good teacher training' against these prescriptions, and one might be forgiven for suspecting a top-down, behavioural, 'technicist' view of teaching in government circles.

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Educationalists have striven to reconceptualise the knowledge base of teaching and consequently of teacher education. Schulman has contributed greatly to this in developing the concept of 'Pedagogic Content Knowledge' (PCK) which encompasses a more in-depth knowledge of the subject than that of a learner, supported by the understanding of how to select what is to be learnt and how to present it in accessible ways (Schulman, 1986). Simultaneously, there has been an attempt to recognise a more productive symbiosis of theory and practice, within the framework of a ' social constructivist' view of the development of knowledge and understanding[3]. In simple terms, this sees the learner as actively constructing his or her own view of the world in interaction with the social environment by filtering the myriad forms of available input through pre-existing mental representations. Measured against this concept of knowledge, the efficient teacher is not one who implements prescription to the letter, but one who is able to synthesise different forms of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, in order to respond effectively in a social context. In the world of teacher education, therefore, the focus has shifted from prescribing what teachers should do to supporting the effective processing and synthesis of different kinds of knowledge. Students learning to teach need to develop technical skills alongside a complex personal understanding of teaching, learning and context and the decision-making skills which will allow them to behave appropriately in a given environment. Working alongside experienced teachers could, therefore, be useful for student teachers if properly exploited. Richards emphasises the need to provide student teachers not just with examples of behaviour and opportunities to mimic it, but most importantly with the cognitive activity inherent in teaching behaviour 'in order to help them develop the pedagogical reasoning skills they need when they begin teaching' (Richards, 1998: 78). This, however, poses a real challenge – teachers themselves often cannot verbalise their accumulated knowledge, let alone plot its construction. This 'rich knowledge base on which they can draw in order to analyse current problems' (Vonk, 1996: 128) is acknowledged as being 'extremely complex and difficult to articulate and pass on to students' (Furlong and Maynard, 1995: 78). How it is actually used in the rapidly changing, highly complex environment of the teaching situation itself is even more of a mystery (see Hammersley, 1979; Van Mannen, 1995; Atkinson and Claxton, 2000).

I would argue that the HE tutor should explore this challenge, experimenting with ways of exposing the multi-dimensional knowledge base of teaching in ways accessible and relevant to student teachers. Tutors traditionally contribute by introducing students to 'received knowledge' in the form of educational theory, research outcomes and government prescriptions, but the real challenge is to show how such knowledge contributes to the development of craft knowledge (see below) and therefore to make it relevant to the practicalities of contextualised teaching reality. As experienced teachers themselves, tutors are repositories of their personal versions of teacher craft knowledge. As higher education tutors, they are more removed from the everyday immediacy of the language teaching act and responsibilities towards pupils, parents and school hierarchy and thus more able to take risks. As researchers and scholars they have easier access to the theoretical knowledge needed to put personal knowledge into perspective against a wide range of professional possibilities and to appraise it critically. They are therefore in an ideal position to explore for student teachers the connections between received knowledge and individualised craft knowledge.

WHAT IS TEACHER 'CRAFT KNOWLEDGE'?

According to Tomlinson, 'novices focus on *surface* features, experts map these features onto underlying *key ideas* and understanding' (Tomlinson, 1995: 32). Woods develops the concept of an integrated accumulation of beliefs, attitudes and knowledge, the 'BAK'; this seems to operate without conscious awareness, only becoming apparent in the kinds of decisions made (Woods, 1996). Ulichny writes of 'a *weltanschauung* of the teaching-learning moment', from which unconscious decisions emanate (Ulichny, 1996: 179).

The gateway to the conceptual world seems to be via the teacher's decisions: Richards identifies one of the challenges of learning to teach as 'to recognise the kinds of decision making employed in teaching and to utilize decision making effectively in one's own teaching' (Richards, 1998: 15). He focuses particularly on 'interactive decision making – that is, the ability to manage a classroom problem, determine what range of options is available, and decide on the best course of action' (Richards, 1998: 25). Decisions are part of an interdependent chain of decisions, each constraining the next with the power to 'trigger a ripple of choice modification' (Drake, 1979: 86). Drake calls for 'a sympathetic infiltration of the decision-maker's thought, imaginative reconstruction of the choice set as perceived by the chooser' (88); how the chooser perceives the environment is paramount. Hargreaves too emphasises the highly interpretative nature of teaching (Hargreaves, 1979: 77).

Bellaby highlights the importance of awareness in decision-making: 'we cannot choose unless alternatives are open to us, and we are aware of them' (Bellaby, 1979: 93). There are, however, doubts about the degree to which conscious decision-making is possible in the busy classroom; action often seems too smooth and fluent to be the product of conscious deliberation. Wallace utilises Schön's description of 'knowing-in-action', the recognition of phenomena, judgements of quality and display of skills of which the professional has no accurate logical understanding or explanation (Wallace, 1991:13). Much of the teacher's day-to-day work is thought to consist of routines developed through experience, which Tait calls the 'recipe knowledge which they have accumulated over the years of being a teacher' (Tait, 1996: 86). Woods coins the term 'experienced structures' (Woods, 1996: 176-78) to describe different degrees of internalisation of patterns of behaviour until they become habit. Although helpful in freeing the mind for more strategic thinking, such habits can become 'unthinking rituals' (Roberts, 1998: 106). Roberts also alerts us to the power of group culture which may lead to teachers adopting practices because they are expected within the institution as 'simply "the normal thing to do"'(Roberts, 1998: 195). Conscious decision-making may take place only at points of crisis when routines are unexpectedly interrupted or prove to be ineffective; Day talks of the critical moments which jolt us out of smooth activity (Day, 1993: 88) and Eraut of 'triggers' (Eraut, 1995). Even if decisions are conscious, teachers sometimes make them purely for survival reasons (Woods, 1996: 244).

Teachers, therefore, are not always consciously aware of, or in individual control of, the knowledge base which prompts their actions. Their behaviour is the result of the complex interweaving of survival tactics, responses to peer and institutional pressure, routines and habits formed by extended practice, and both conscious and intuitive decision-making based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of perceived facts against an individually constructed knowledge-base which synthesises declarative and procedural knowledge constructed from multiple sources and experiences.

Where does this leave us in terms of supporting student teachers in their development of practice? Students need to develop a complex network of helpful key ideas; they need to be aware of choices available to them and the potential consequences of choices; and they need to develop a wide range of 'experienced structures' which are supportive of pupil learning. Whilst acknowledging the complexity and messiness of teaching and accepting that there are not always logical reasons for teacher beliefs and behaviour, we must work to reconstruct for students the range of possibilities from which we as teachers have made our own idiosyncratic, often subconscious choices. Our own routines come from somewhere, either as conventional patterns of behaviour adopted without question, or as decisions whose origins are hidden in the distant past. Our challenge as teacher educators is to attempt to capture our own behavioural patterns, to be honest in trying to understand their origins, to identify the triggers which cause us to consider adjusting our patterns in the midst of action, and to speculate about the range of choices available to us at such moments and their possible consequences. There are no guarantees of success, and considerable risks: 'becoming too aware can result in a loss of fluency and paralysis' (Claxton, 2000: 35). The school-based mentor with responsibilities for pupil learning may wish to avoid such risks; as a HE tutor, however, I pose myself the following challenges:

"the complexity and the elusive nature of teacher knowledge and decision-making"

- experimentation to develop awareness of my own conceptual framework as a teacher and ways of articulating this;
- honesty in revealing my personal teaching world, 'warts and all', and in measuring this against theory and government expectations;
- support for school-based mentors in accessing and articulating their own knowledge and evaluating it;
- support for student teachers in accessing, understanding and evaluating the conceptual frameworks of the experienced teachers with whom they are working.

HOW?

Given the complexity and the elusive nature of teacher knowledge and decision-making, the challenge is a huge one. Researchers continue to struggle with it; any form of access is dependent on self-reporting, which is selective, interpretative, and transforming, i.e. the very act of introspection and verbalisation alters the knowledge itself. Hargreaves reminds us that any attempt by an experienced teacher to explain their decisions can

amount only to a *commentary* which consists of a *rationalisation*. Nevertheless, he concludes that as long as the teacher is honestly exploring the purposes, intentions and understandings behind his or her actions, this 'constitutes a legitimate source of uncovering the common sense knowledge which becomes tacit in the decision-making itself' (Hargreaves, 1979: 75). What opportunities exist in initial teacher education for this process?

- Narrative accounts:

  Student teachers can read some of the narrative accounts exploring teacher knowledge, such as those of Elbaz (1983), Woods (1996), Freeman and Richards (1998), Black and Halliwell (2000). Such accounts offer powerful insights into the elusive conceptual world of the teacher. However, student teachers are primarily focused on gaining practical solutions to real survival problems in the classroom, and may be unable to understand the immediate relevance of such reading. For some students there is a danger in confirming the idiosyncratic nature of teaching, since that may lead them to suppose that attempts to approach it in a formal or systematic way are futile.

- Observation and discussion:

  Student teachers regularly observe their mentors, and mentors observe their students. Pre- and post-lesson discussions are vital in illuminating shared experiences and mapping key ideas and understandings onto surface features. Adequate time is needed for productive discussion; also the teacher needs to be highly skilled in identifying relevant opportunities and in articulating understanding. Unfortunately, neither precondition is guaranteed (see Gray, 2001a and Zanting, 2001). Where time is lacking, it is tempting for mentor (and HE tutor!) to respond to student desperation for 'quick fix' advice rather than to explore reasoning.

- Joint planning, teaching and exploration of teaching dilemmas:

  Collaborative work with experienced teachers can help students gain access to concepts and choices directly related to their immediate teaching concerns. It also helps teacher educators gain valuable insights into the perceptions and interpretations of the student, which is equally vital if support is to be targeted effectively. This again is time-consuming, and requires skilful choreography if genuine exchange and collaboration are to be achieved. Both parties need to be self-aware, confident, honest and articulate enough to reveal their own understandings. Students and mentors alike need opportunities and support to develop these skills.

- Student research projects:

  Zanting describes an interesting experiment to focus both mentor and student on the need to explicate practical knowledge through the means of coursework assignments (Zanting, 2001). She investigates a range of possible research tools for student teachers to use to explore their mentors' ideas about teaching, compare them with their own, and link both to theory. Her account identifies concept-mapping and sentence completion as the most manageable tools. She alerts us to the variable skill and commitment of both mentors and students in accessing and articulating their own conceptual frameworks, and the need to anchor any such activity firmly in the practical survival needs of student teachers.

- Stimulated recall:

  One technique rejected by Zanting deserves closer investigation. Johnson uses 'stimulated recall' to provide 'a running commentary' on the teacher's perceptions of her own teaching (Johnson, 1996: 32). In this procedure a lesson is videotaped and the teacher subsequently watches the tape in the presence of a researcher, stopping the tape at intervals to comment. It is important for the watcher to differentiate between their thoughts at the time of action and their reflective thoughts on watching the tape (Zanting, 2001: 76-9). This could be a very powerful way of revealing what conscious thoughts are fleetingly available to the teacher in the act of teaching, and we have ourselves experimented with it on a small scale with mentors. However, it is a time-consuming activity and requires a willing and articulate teacher-actor as well as an expert prompter to maximise its utility. It is also extremely difficult to distinguish between one's contemporaneous thoughts and subsequent reflection.

"valuable insights for student teachers in breaking down the mystery of teaching"

All of the above, skilfully used and exploited, can provide valuable insights for student teachers in breaking down the mystery of teaching. All are challenging for both teacher and novice, and require a high degree of self-awareness, as well as a form of shared discourse to allow articulation and discussion (see Freeman and Richards, 1998). Part of the role of the higher education tutor must be to support both mentor and student teacher in developing these prerequisites.

PRACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TUTOR

An important feature of the PGCE course at the University of Birmingham is 'school-based method work'. This process begins when a local mentor comes to the university campus to teach the student group Russian for half an hour. There is subsequent analysis of the affective and cognitive experiences involved in personal learning, and identification of the strategies and techniques used by the teacher.[4] The tutor subsequently 'borrows' a group of pupils and teaches them a new language, enabling the student teachers to obtain an objective view of the techniques which they have experienced subjectively and to begin

to explore the different personal approaches of two teachers. After further discussion the student teachers try out their own ideas in a safe environment by teaching small groups of primary children a new language for half an hour, observed by tutor, mentor and their peers. Later they teach larger groups of older pupils for increasingly longer periods of time in a variety of different partner schools prior to the first block placement. Students thus practise basic skills, share and discuss ideas and materials and form a support group with peers before experiencing the full emotional and professional pressure of placement. This arrangement provides opportunities for drawing attention to the types of decision facing teachers at various stages of the process.

There will be few surprises for readers in the range of activities undertaken, such as post-lesson discussion. Collaborative analysis by the mentor and the tutor of the Russian lesson supports the mentor in clarification of his actions and methodology and the tutor in integration of theory and practice. Both exploit it to explore alternative explanations for decisions or to open up the range of choices. The aim is not to pinpoint the exact reasoning behind behaviour, but to alert students to the kinds of choices available and to criteria for choosing. At this early stage students are naturally looking for fail-safe recipes and techniques. An open discussion between experienced professionals supports the course emphasis on 'learning how to learn to teach' as opposed to 'being told how to teach'.

Discussion and analysis of the tutor's later lesson offers similar possibilities for exploitation. It is a rare opportunity for the tutor to establish his or her 'street cred' (see Gray, 2001a: 49) and therefore creates professional pressure to impress the students. However, in order to exploit the situation fully and maximise the potential for student learning this needs to be resisted.

WHY THE TUTOR?

Student teachers observe many professional, experienced teachers working with their own classes in their normal working environment structured by school and departmental policies and the network of relationships built up within the community. When tutors 'borrow' classes, they are outsiders. The pupils are strangers, there are no complex dances of interrelationships already built. Lessons are planned in ignorance, relying only upon learned assumptions about 'typical' pupils. Tutors are therefore less able to tailor planning to the specific needs of particular individuals, they are more exposed to the uncertainties of classroom life, but perhaps they are thus more able to use this experience to explore decision-making.

EXPLOITING THE OPPORTUNITY

The underlying purpose of borrowing a class to teach is to work through with student teachers the kinds of decision-making involved in planning and teaching a lesson and in analysing the experience to improve future performance. The following is a practical example.

Phase One: Discussion

Standard procedure is for student teachers to see a lesson plan before observing. My colleague has experimented with a gapped lesson plan which students complete during the lesson itself. I provide students with a full plan and suggested rationale for the decisions made, some of which can easily be criticised and thus provoke discussion. I have two parallel sets of aims in borrowing a class to teach:

1. for the pupils: to introduce them to German, to ensure that they leave with a sense of achievement after a positive experience;
2. for the student teachers: to demonstrate a range of possible teaching techniques, to expose some of the inherent dangers, and explore the choices involved. It is made clear to the students that this is not a 'model' lesson, rather a collection of techniques for specific purposes drawn from a language teacher's repertoire.

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Planning needs to address both groups simultaneously. The following gives some flavour of how this is achieved.

- Teaching content:
  - greetings and introductions: *Guten Morgen*, *Wie heißt du*? *Ich heiße ... Auf Wiedersehen* (Good morning. What's your name? My name is … Goodbye)
  - *ein Apfel, ein Ball, ein Regenschirm, ein Hut, ein Hund, ein Löwe* (an apple, a ball, an umbrella, a hat, a dog, a lion)
  - colours: *rot, grün, gelb, blau* (red, green, yellow, blue)
  - simple sentence structures: *Ist das ...*? *Das ist … Was ist das*? *Gib' mir bitte einen …* (Is that …? That is … What is that? Please give me a …)
  - simple answers and politeness phrases: *ja, nein, danke, bitte* (yes, no, thank you, please)
  - simple game language: *Ich habe gewonnen. Du bist dran* (I've won. It's your turn)

Reasons for choosing this content are explored. It demonstrates the differences between introducing single items and rehearsing a dialogue. It puts individual words quickly into simple sentences so that pupils can 'do something with them' (a Happy Families game). It highlights the difficulty of choosing definite or indefinite articles when introducing new words. It embraces a 'communicative' approach to grammar, i.e. teaching what the pupils need in order to convey meaning within a certain situation. It addresses the limits of learning power and the potential for

differentiation with goals for all (learning the nouns) and goals for some (constructing a complex sentence). The choice of nouns raises interesting issues; it would be more helpful to pupils to introduce objects within related themes (e.g. all animals, all clothes, etc.). My choice is purely opportunistic: masculine nouns for which I have sufficient numbers of objects, including a weak noun, to demonstrate the linguistic traps. Decision possibilities are discussed, and my own, sometimes arbitrary, choices criticised. The main concern is to ensure that the student teachers are aware of the alternatives available and their different consequences.

- Teaching Materials:

  I use a range of teaching materials: real objects, pictures, OHT cut-outs, coloured card and word cards. We discuss the implications of the different media for both teacher and taught. OHTs are more manageable and versatile, supporting better pace. Objects slow pace, but pupils enjoy handling them and they can motivate more reluctant or shyer pupils. Large word flashcards support the build-up towards full sentences and the game – this stimulates discussion about the links between sound and shape and the thorny question of when and how to introduce the written word. It demonstrates possibilities for visual and kinaesthetic sentence building. Pieces of coloured card are used to introduce colours, and sets of cards for the Happy Families game (pupils play in groups of four and have to make requests to collect a set of one object in four different colours). The creation of such resources is labour-intensive, stimulating discussion of the need to plan long-term and produce multipurpose resources. At a later stage this feeds into discussions about the versatility of using ICT when available.

- Teaching Techniques:

  Discussion moves to how the choices made in terms of content and materials determine the teaching techniques. Greetings and introductions lend themselves to demonstration, repetition, dividing the class in half for rehearsal, and pairwork. They also pose difficulties: how can meaning be clarified when there is no concrete object to refer to? How can pupils distinguish between *du* and *ich*? Can they remember full sentences, or the sequence of them? How can we make it clear that they substitute their own names when answering the question? When an experienced teacher tackles such issues they pre-empt the problems by selecting appropriate techniques; the student teacher needs to be alerted to the potential dangers and to possible solutions.

  Learning the nouns lends itself to a variety of activities. Listening carefully, repetition, making choices through a progressive question and answer technique, playing OHT games such as Kim's game (*Was fehlt*? 'What's missing?') and pupil involvement as game-leader form essentials in a language teacher's repertoire. Students need to learn the limitations of these techniques. When do pupils lose concentration? How many are involved at any one time? What do the others do? Are pupils merely parrots or are they learning to use the language autonomously?

  For colours, each pupil is given a piece of coloured card to hold up when the colour is called. Is this overload? Do pupils understand the words or are they copying peers? There is little pupil articulation – how does this affect the learning?

  The sentence structures are introduced by physical response: objects obtained earlier in the lesson are handed back – '*Gib' mir bitte einen grünen Regenschirm*'(Please give me a green umbrella). Sentences are constructed with word-cards and practised. Again, this raises serious teaching issues: how do we switch from nominative to accusative, deal with the adjective endings or the weak noun (*ein Löwe, einen Löwen* 'a lion')? How is the game introduced and explained, in English or in the target language? How well-prepared are pupils? During the game student teachers work with small groups and listen carefully to investigate what has been successful, what they think the pupils have actually learned and where confusion has arisen. This is an excellent starting point for post-lesson discussion.

- Summary:

  Readers can see that this is an ambitious lesson plan including many potential traps and provoking discussion of a number of controversial issues. In each area we discuss the reasons for my own idiosyncratic choices against a background of alternative possibilities which sometimes carry more convincing justifications. The process is intended to open the door to a wide range of possible choices rather than to offer a model lesson to emulate.

Phase Two: Risk-Taking

I decided in Autumn 2001 to attempt to capture my thoughts during the act of teaching and articulate them 'live' to student teachers. During the usual pre-lesson seminar with the students I discussed this and its potential consequences. We took a video recorder into the school classroom, operated by one of the student teachers seated behind the 28 Year 8 pupils. Pupils were clearly also entitled to some forewarning and explanation. I told them that we were undertaking a project looking at what teachers do and how they make decisions, and that I would occasionally interrupt the lesson to talk to the teachers behind them. The pupils were therefore placed in an unusual situation as collaborators.

- Metacognitive Commentary – A Possibility?

  It was difficult to remember to provide a

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commentary; nevertheless, the video recording revealed a total of 32 interruptions during the 50 minute lesson. What was revealing during subsequent transcription was the limited scope of the commentary. It focused almost exclusively on my perception and interpretation of pupil reaction to the teaching. The following selection represents the key issues attracting my attention; other comments were very similar in focus and content:

- that one was getting a bit difficult;
- was it clear what I wanted them to do or did it confuse them?
- that was too confusing;
- notice hands go up as soon as you say the word;
- notice only a few hands go up – no alternatives given;
- notice they're playing with the fluffy toys now, not listening to me;
- notice their repetition of *und* as well;
- because we haven't said it much and it's a difficult word;
- there are some people I'm ignoring because they are behind me;
- emphasise the difference between *Hut* and *Hund* because they are quite similar;
- notice we're getting confused with *ein*s and *einen* now, because I've gone back to *ein* with this;
- notice we've done an awful lot, the colours were far too quick and one step too many;
- what I should have done at this point is actually get all the toys and things back, because they are fiddling;
- I haven't told them that, you see, they have to work that out for themselves;
- notice they're saying *einen* for everything.

These are not full explorations and explanations of events, but in conjunction with the lesson video they serve as a useful starting point for further in-depth discussion of what the teacher notices, what clues support 'withitness' (Eraut, 1995: 19). They exemplify the key skills which Atkinson identifies as essential for new teachers to develop: 'reading the context, interpreting conditions and making adjustments to the lesson' (Atkinson, 2000: 75). They help students witness the '*heightened sensitivity to clues*' which is needed as a first step (Claxton, 2000: 27) and to explore the range of possibilities open at each point.

What of the pupils?

The aim in this experiment was to help student teachers gain insight into the teaching mind in the act of teaching. I was unsure of my ability to monitor and articulate my own thoughts whilst maintaining teaching fluency, but an even greater risk was the reaction of the pupils. There was no prior established relationship between teacher and taught. The real surprise was that far from disrupting the establishment of a relationship, the process seemed to facilitate it to such an extent that the pupils began to support the commentary and become involved in it. They began to respond to comments, contributing a further dimension to the experience for the student teachers. There were nods, 'yes's and even '*Ja*'s when I commented that things were getting too difficult or confusing or had not been well enough taught. Pupils responded immediately with greater attention when I referred to their 'fiddling' with the toys. Most agreed that it was a mistake to introduce the colours as additional material; there were, however, a few dissenting voices – 'oh, no, Miss, that's fine, we want more!' – a better illustration of the need for differentiation than any theoretical discussion. When I highlighted the beginnings of confusion between '*ein*' and '*einen*', pupils made deliberate attempts to distinguish between the two forms, thus underlining the need to draw explicit attention to grammar patterns in use and supporting the current thrust of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Overall, it was an excellent opportunity for the student teachers to see pupils as knowledgeable partners in the learning/teaching process, capable of making relevant and mature commentary on that process.

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An interesting effect was the rapid development of a productive dialogue with a previously unknown class. This could, of course, simply be explained by the novelty of the experience and the invitation to collaborate in a different kind of activity with a new group of people. Nevertheless, it might be useful to draw attention to the nature of the commentary, which revealed my feelings of responsibility as a teacher for any difficulties which the pupils encountered and my belief that with appropriate support they could overcome them. It would be interesting to pursue this idea further with more rigorous and extensive experimentation. With subsequent PGCE cohorts this initial experience has taken place in a different school each year, each one relatively new to the Partnership. I have therefore felt more concerned with 'exploring the territory' and less confident about taking risks to exploit the opportunity more fully. Although this has prevented me from pursuing my goals further, it has nevertheless provided yet another useful discussion point for the student teachers in terms of assessment of the context and decision-making. I look forward to future possibilities for refining the initial insights gained from the experiment.

IN SUMMARY

Teacher educators cannot hope to achieve what generations of dedicated researchers have failed to, i.e. to reveal in its complexity the craft knowledge of experienced teachers and the way in which it is used in the act of teaching. Nevertheless, there exist a variety of ways in which glimpses can be provided for newcomers. None is easy or comprehensive and there is no guarantee that any of them will enable the student to become a better teacher. There seems, however, to be some

"we ... give student teachers a realistic view of the ... choices available"

consensus in the field of teacher education that a teacher needs professional sensitivity to classroom events, helpful ways of interpreting those events, and a range of useful options from which to choose an effective response and open a productive path forward. By offering the widest possible range of insights into such patterns of assessment, decision and adjustment, we at least give student teachers a realistic view of the challenges and a flavour of the choices available to them, along with the kinds of criteria, developed through theoretical knowledge, which can help them make effective choices. I have argued that the higher education tutor is in a prime position to experiment in this area and to offer support to both student teachers and school-based mentors in understanding and exploiting the relationship between the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of teaching. I offer the above as an example of how this can be done and look forward to reading future contributions on how other HE tutors and school-based mentors tackle the same challenge.

NOTES

[1] For a more detailed discussion of conceptions of teacher knowledge and styles of teacher education, see Calderhead and Shorrock (1997); Richards (1998), Roberts (1998), Richards and Nunan (1990), Klapper (2001) and Furlong and Smith (1996).

[2] The Key Stage 3 Strategy is already compulsory for ITE, even though student teachers are obliged by law to spend 24 of their 36 weeks of 'training' in schools where the Strategy is voluntary and therefore may or may not be implemented …?

[3] See Williams and Burden (1997) for an in-depth discussion of the constructivist approach.

[4] For a detailed analysis of the process see Gray (2001b). Although this analysis discusses the DOPLA course (Development of Postgraduate and Language Assistants), the ideas were adopted in principle from PGCE course practice.

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NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions
The Editors welcome previously unpublished articles, reports and other contributions which will further the cause of the learning and teaching of languages. These contributions are normally expected to fall into one of the following categories, although contributions of different lengths will also be considered:

(a) Articles or reports of about 3000 to 5000 words. (Longer pieces may be considered subject to prior consultation with the editors.)
(b) Shorter articles of up to 1000 words that might include items of information, notes on innovative classroom practice and discussion points (including those arising from previous articles).

An abstract of 200-250 words should accompany articles of 3000 to 5000 words and an abstract of approximately 100 words should accompany those of 1000 words.

Articles should be written in English and may deal with any aspect of FL teaching and learning, FL teacher education, contemporary language, literature and culture. Previously unpublished photocopiable classroom material to accompany the contribution (a worksheet, for example) is particularly welcome.

Presentation
Contributions must be fully formatted, typed with double spacing and sent in on disk or as an email attachment (MS Word preferred), accompanied by 3 copies on paper and an address for correspondence. These should be presented anonymously for review purposes, carrying *no* indication of the author's name or place of employment. The latter details should be given in a covering letter. Remember to keep a copy of the article for yourself. Please give your article one title only, not a title and a sub-title, but do feel free to divide it up with (short) sub-headings.

If you quote references or sources, please give full details using the Harvard system, e.g.: Barber, C. (1993) *The English Language: a historical introduction*. Cambridge: CUP. In the text the author's name, year of publication and page number where relevant should be quoted in brackets, e.g.: (Barber, 1993: 27).

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