Implementing *The Canadian Language Benchmarks*: Teachers' Perceptions of Changes in Their Teaching Approaches, Classroom Practices, and Conceptions of Teaching

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by

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Implementing *The Canadian Language Benchmarks*:

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

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MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This collective case study explores selected teachers' perceptions of changes in their teaching approaches, classroom practices, and conceptions of teaching in implementing *The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB)*. Five main themes emerge from an analysis of one-to-one interviews: a broadened understanding of communicative competence, lesson planning, responding to the functional language needs of students, teaching in context, and assessment. An important subtext signalling changes in the participant – student relationship also surfaced. Findings indicate that the participants perceived changes in both their approach and practices during the implementation of the *CLB*. However, participants did not respond to questions regarding their conceptions of teaching. This may warrant research.

The participants moved from a grammar-based approach to a task-based approach in teaching adult ESL. Their understanding of communicative competence broadened to include actional, sociocultural, discourse, and strategic competencies, in addition to linguistic competence. Their lesson planning became more long-term. In addition to involving students in initial needs assessment to identify the topics that students wanted to study, as they had in the past, the participants involved their students in initial and ongoing needs assessment in order to identify the language tasks that students needed to study. They switched from teaching grammar and pronunciation as discrete skills to teaching them in context. Their major criterion for assessment changed from

grammatical accuracy to communicative fluency -- the learner's ability to perform the language task successfully, to "get the message across."

Key recommendations include involving teachers in a long-term implementation strategy that allows them to try out and reflect on curriculum elements, ensuring that AESL teachers acquire knowledge of how to teach English grammar and pronunciation in context, and encouraging teachers in training to explore conceptions of teaching and learning, with the goal of formulating and articulating their own conceptions of teaching and learning.

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The Nature of the Study

This study is an inquiry into curriculum implementation and change, especially teachers' perceptions of changes in their classroom practices, approaches to teaching, or conceptions of teaching when using first *The Canadian Language Benchmarks Working Document* (*CLB*) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 1996) and then *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000* (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB), 2000) and *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (CCLB, 2000) as a framework for teaching.

Statement of the Problem

A Manitoba *CLB* implementation summary stated that working within a *CLB* framework had required teachers to shift away from a focus on grammar-based teaching to a focus on communicative competence (Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship (MCHC), 1997). The summary suggested that, because the *CLB* is task-based, a teacher accustomed to grammar objectives-based instruction and assessment would be expected to shift approach and develop task-based teaching techniques. This suggestion raised questions about whether the Adult English as a Second Language (AESL) teachers who used the *CLB* as a basis for curriculum and teaching perceived that they had changed their classroom practices and approaches to teaching. Did using the *CLB* as a basis for curriculum and teaching necessitate a shift in approach for those AESL teachers? If so,

what kind of shift do they perceive that they have made? If a teacher had taken a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach to teaching English before implementing the *CLB*, would that teacher perceive implementing the *CLB* as a change in approach and/or practice?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore with selected AESL teachers whether they perceived that their classroom practices, approaches to teaching, or conceptions of teaching had changed in implementing the *CLB*, and, if so, to explore with them the changes that they perceived.

Significance of the Study

Although considerable resources were expended to familiarize Canadian AESL teachers with the *CLB* and its implications for curriculum and teaching, to date there has been only one formal study related to *CLB* implementation in Canada. Fleming (1998) examined the issues of five AESL instructors concerning their own autonomy over curriculum decision-making *prior* to their implementing the *CLB*. This is the first formal study of how implementing the *CLB* has changed selected AESL teachers' classroom practices, conceptions of teaching, or approaches to teaching AESL. It will not only provide information on which classroom practices, approaches to ESL teaching, and conceptions of ESL teaching Manitoba AESL teachers perceive have changed and how and why they have

changed during *CLB* implementation, but may also provide an indication of the degree of implementation of *CLB*-related curricula and help to inform future pre- and in-service professional development.

As Kumaravadivelu (2003) makes clear, AESL teaching is now in a post-method phase:

> First, the traditional concept of method with its generic set of theoretical principles and classroom techniques offers only a limited and limiting perspective on language learning and teaching. Second, learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations are unpredictably numerous. Therefore, current models of teacher education programs can hardly prepare teachers to tackle all these unpredictable needs, wants, and situations. Third, the primary task of in-service and pre-service teacher education programs is to create conditions for present and prospective teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge, skill, authority, and autonomy to construct their own personal pedagogic knowledge. Thus, there is an imperative need to move away from a method-based pedagogy to a postmethod pedagogy. (p. 42)

Edge (2004) states, "The age of fixed methods of language teaching has passed, and with it the feeling of certainty about how one can best teach English." (p. 47) In our post-method context, Cumming (1993) underscores the necessity of studying teachers' perceptions with this comment about teachers' roles:

> ...The need to understand language teachers' knowledge and actions has become more crucial as teachers have recently come to assume more important roles in the organization of language education throughout the world. In the process of abandoning prescriptive "teaching methods" and a corresponding move toward "learner-centred curricula," many language teachers have come to assume primary responsibility for curriculum planning and organization themselves, aiming to respond to each new class of students, and their particular goals and backgrounds, in unique terms. (Cumming, 1993, p. 32)

This shift in teacher responsibility described by Cummings became particularly evident in Canada with the introduction of the *CLB,* a framework for curriculum and teaching that required teachers to plan and organize curriculum based on the *CLB* and the needs of the students.

Research Questions

In the initial interviews with selected teachers, the primary research question was: Do the AESL teachers interviewed perceive that their classroom practices, approaches to AESL teaching, or conception of teaching have changed in implementing the *CLB*? If so, how do they describe these changes?

While transcribing the interviews, I remembered a question posed by a professor in relation to a practice study I did for a qualitative research

course: Were the changes that the teachers described attributable to implementing the *CLB*, or were the changes attributable to their professional maturation as AESL teachers? Another question slowly formed as I read the transcripts and continued my literature search: Could the changes that the teachers described be attributed to their being expert teachers?

Background for the Study

Before the release of *The Canadian Language Benchmarks Working Document* (CIC, 1996), Canadian AESL teachers had no common language with which to describe levels of English language proficiency. For example, teachers in the Winnipeg Adult Education Centre AESL program and the Vancouver Community College AESL program might have described an AESL student's English language proficiency as at a low intermediate level, but there would have been no common understanding of what "low intermediate" meant.

The *CLB* document provides that common understanding in the form of levels descriptors. In the *CLB* document, English language proficiency is described in terms of the tasks the learner can accomplish using English:

> A Canadian Language Benchmark is a description of a person's ability to use the English language to accomplish a set of tasks. The descriptions [of] each Benchmark reflect abilities to use the English language in selected

competencies, under specifically defined performance and situation conditions. (CIC, 1996, p. 3)

In the preface to *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults (CLB 2000)*, the Board of Directors and Staff of the CCLB comment:

> It seems such a simple task--getting everyone to " talk the same language" when describing language ability. However, it has been far from easy. (Pawlikowska-Smith 2000, p. v)

The Adult Language Training Branch (ALT) of the Government of Manitoba recognized that a long-term implementation strategy was necessary if Manitoba AESL teachers were to "talk the same language" (MCHC, 1997), i.e., implement the *CLB.* The ALT Branch mandated the Committee on the Assessment of Language in Manitoba (CALM), an advisory committee to ALT representing the major deliverers of AESL instruction in Manitoba, to develop a *CLB* implementation strategy for the Province. This strategy included the design and delivery of a series of professional development events to familiarize Manitoba AESL teachers in government-funded programs with the *CLB* and its implications for classroom practice.

In those sessions, teachers became familiar with the *CLB* documents and the Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) model of communicative competence and in one of them they developed core language learning objectives based on the *CLB.* (For more information on the specific topics

addressed in those professional development events, please see Appendix A). The objectives were incorporated into *A Curriculum Framework for Implementing The Canadian Language Benchmarks in Manitoba* (Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship (MCHC), 1997). Teachers have had opportunity to become more familiar with the framework through further professional development sessions, at TESL Manitoba conferences, and through using it to develop curricula for their specific classroom teaching situations.

My interest in this study came from my work as a Manitoba AESL teacher, as a TESL Canada Board member, and as a Manitoba representative to the CCLB. I was a TESL Canada Board member when the idea of developing the *CLB* was first discussed. As an AESL teacher in a government-funded program, I participated in field-testing a version of the *CLB* prior to its release as the 1996 Working Document. I also participated in the series of professional development workshops for teachers that CALM designed as part of the *CLB* implementation strategy. Furthermore, I led the editing team that compiled and edited the Manitoba Core Language Learning Objectives that had been developed at a CLB implementation workshop by teachers in the three major Manitoba AESL programs: Winnipeg School Division, Red River College, and Applied Linguistics Centre. The objectives that the teachers developed were incorporated in *A Curriculum Framework for Implementing The Canadian Language Benchmarks in Manitoba* (MCHC, 1997). As department head of the AESL

program in The Winnipeg School Division for six years (1998 - 2004), my primary responsibility was facilitating the implementation of *CLB*-related curricula. These experiences have given me a deep understanding of the *CLB*, knowledge of how the *CLB* informs curriculum development, and of the process of curriculum implementation. They also raised questions in my mind about the impact of the *CLB*, the degree of implementation of *CLB*-related curriculum, and teachers' perceptions of the influence of the *CLB* on their classroom practices and conceptions of teaching.

Definitions

The following list of definitions may be helpful in reading this report.

Actional competence – Knowledge of oral language and speech act sets (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell 1995, p. 22) (Please see Appendix G for further details.)

Approach – "...refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 20).

Communicative language teaching (CLT) – "An approach to teaching which emphasizes the communication of meaning and the process of communication over the practice and manipulation of language forms" (Pawlikowska-Smith 2002, p.75).

Communicative competence – "The ability to communicate and understand messages across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (Tedick & Walker, 1984) Second language teacher education: the problems that plague us. *The Modern Languages Journal, 78*(3), 300-312, as cited in *A Curriculum Framework for Implementing The Canadian Language Benchmarks in Manitoba.* Winnipeg, MB: ALT Branch. (Available from ALT Branch, 500-213 Notre Dame Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 1N2)

Conceptions of teaching – "*Comprehensive, organized,* and *unified* bodies of knowledge about an object, idea, or phenomenon. Some people feel conceptions affect people's actions and lead to their performance" (Freeman & Richards, 1993, p. 4).

Discourse – "Communication of thought by speech or in writing; text. Meaningful, purposeful stretch of language which is connected as an intricate network of meanings and functioning as a whole" (CIC, 1996, p. 98)

Discourse competence - "Reflects the verbal, non-verbal, and paralinguistic knowledge underlying the ability to organize spoken and written texts meaningfully and appropriately. In oral language some researchers prefer

the term conversation competence" Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship. (1997).

Linguistic competence – "Reflects grammatical and lexical knowledge and skill, including knowledge of vocabulary, rules of word formation, pronunciation, spelling, and sentence formation" Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship. (1997).

Strategic competence – "Refers to the mastery of communicative strategies which enable individuals to enhance the effectiveness of communication or compensate for communication breakdowns" Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship (1997).

Sociolinguistic competence – "Reflects the extent to which speech acts are produced and understood appropriately for the social context, including the role relationships, the shared information of the participants, the communicative purposes of the interaction, register (level of formality), gender, paralinguistics" (Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship,1997).

Suprasegmental – "A unit which extends over more than one sound in an utterance, e.g. stress and tone." From Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992). Essex, England: Wesley Longman Limited, p. 366.

Task – A practical demonstration of a skill (CIC, 1996, p. 103).

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) – "Refers to an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 223).

Acronyms

The following list of acronyms may be helpful in reading this report.

AESL - Adult English as a Second Language

ALT - The Adult Language Training Branch of the Government of Manitoba

CALM - Committee on the Assessment of Language in Manitoba

CCLB - The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

CIC - Citizenship and Immigration Canada

CLT - Communicative Language Training approach

MCHC - Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship

TBLT - Task-Based Language Teaching

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Review of Literature

In preparing my thesis proposal for this study, I began to review relevant literature. At the start, my review of literature included material on interview techniques, *CLB* implementation, curriculum innovation and implementation, paradigm shift and educational change, and conceptions of teaching. As I interviewed the participants, transcribed the interviews, and thought about what I was hearing, I began to explore the topics of post-method pedagogy, and teacher expertise. Throughout the writing of this thesis, I have continued to revisit the transcripts and to reread the literature, as my ideas developed.

Because the participants were being asked about their perceptions during the implementation of the *CLB*, I thought a review of the Canadian Language Benchmarks literature was the logical place to begin.

Canadian Language Benchmarks

The Manitoba *CLB* Implementation Summary (Manitoba Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship, 1997) detailed a rationale for a long-term *CLB* implementation strategy for Manitoba AESL:

> The *CLB* document (descriptors) was only a starting point and it alone was of limited value to teachers. Working within a *CLB* framework required a shift in focus away from grammar-based teaching to communicative competence as defined in the *CLB*. A curriculum framework as well as a series of workshops needed to be

developed to fully understand the *CLB* and its classroom implications. It was also important to draw on the experience and expertise in the Adult ESL field here in Manitoba. (MCHC, 1997)

A review of the *CLB* and *CLB*-related documents with which teachers are familiar is in order. *The Canadian Language Benchmarks: English as a Second Language for Adults/ English as a Second Language for Literacy Learners* (CIC, 1996) was the original *CLB* working document. The Introduction to the *CLB* (1996) defined a Benchmark as "a person's ability to use the English language to accomplish a set of tasks" (p.3) and described the performance conditions, situational conditions, sample tasks, and background knowledge surrounding the Benchmark competency. It made clear that the *CLB* is neither a proficiency test nor a syllabus (CIC, 1996, p. 4). It presented "a task-based descriptive scale of language proficiency in English as a second language...expressed in terms of communicative competence as twelve benchmarks (reference points)" (CIC, 1996, p.1). It placed learners' English language ability on the Benchmarks continuum (from Benchmark 1 to Benchmark 12) in three skill areas: oral/aural, reading, and writing. It also outlined "the increasing levels of communicative demand from 'initial basic competence' at Benchmark 1 to 'advanced fluent competence' at Benchmark 12, placed on an adult newcomer to Canada, primarily through the selective focus of his/her settlement and integration needs." (CIC, 1996, p. 1.) Within each of the three skill areas, it outlined the four areas of competence selected for each

Benchmark and provided "samples indicative of the range of a person's language ability (they do not represent all areas of ability in the language)" (CIC, 1996, p. 1).

Canadian AESL teachers used the 1996 working document as a curriculum framework for teaching and learning and were invited to provide feedback on it. In response to their feedback, the working document was revised as *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults* (Pawlikowska-Smith, 2000). *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults* describes a person's ability to use the English language to accomplish a set of tasks at 12 Benchmark levels, in four language skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each Benchmark contains a "global performance, or a short Benchmark performance profile and four selected competencies in social interaction, instructions, suasion and information, as well as examples of communication tasks which may be used to demonstrate the required standard of proficiency " (Retrieved from www.language.ca, December 21, 2004).

In response to teachers' requests, a separate document, *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (Johansson, Angst, Beer, Martin, Rebeck, & Sibilleau, 2001) was also produced. Teachers had requested a document that would respond to the learning needs of AESL literacy learners. *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (Johansson *et al.*, 2001),

designed to be used with the Listening and Speaking sections of *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults,* "lays out the progression of reading, writing, and numeracy skills for ESL adults who have little or no literacy skills in their first language" (Retrieved December 15, 2004, from www.language.ca). It also provides descriptions of ESL literacy, the continuum of adult ESL literacy learners, and the relationship between the ESL Benchmarks and the ESL Literacy Benchmarks.

Noteworthy in *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners* (Johansson *et al.*, 2001) is the articulation of the phases of literacy, particularly the Foundations Phase. The Foundations Phase is described in the Introduction:

> The Foundations Phase describes pre-reading and -writing concepts and skills that students must develop prior to Phase I. Students who have never attended a school before and have no experience with the written text usually need to develop some basics before they begin to read and write.... The Foundations Phase begins with an *overview* that provides a global description, sociocultural and linguistic considerations, learning strategies, and pre-reading and writing strategies for learners.... [It] has been further divided into two progress points, *Initial* and *Developing,* to reflect the development of concepts related to the printed page (p. vi).

The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A Guide to Implementation (Holmes, Kingwell, Pettis, & Pidlaski, 2001) "focuses on using the Canadian Language Benchmarks when planning for teaching and learning, and builds on current directions and practices in ESL instruction. It includes numerous classroom and program examples from across the country" (Retrieved December 15, 2004, from www.language.ca).

The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Additional Sample Task Ideas (CCLB, 2001) "builds on *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a Second Language for Adults* with an extensive listing of additional sample task ideas for Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing Benchmarks" (Retrieved December 15, 2004, from www.language.ca).

A Curriculum Framework for Implementing The Canadian Language Benchmarks in Manitoba Working Document (MCHC, 1997) was the document used throughout a series of professional development events in Manitoba (See Appendix A, the CALM *CLB* Implementation Strategy). At those events, teachers were introduced to the theoretical background of the *CLB* and began identifying the specific objectives related to carrying out the language functions presented in the *CLB* levels 1-8.

Based on the material developed by the teachers using the framework in the workshops, an editing team produced the Manitoba Core Language Learning Objectives. The Manitoba Core Language Learning Objectives have been incorporated into *A Curriculum Framework for Implementing The Canadian Language Benchmarks in Manitoba* (MCHC, 1997). The

Introduction to the Objectives states that the Manitoba Core Language Learning Objectives are not a curriculum or syllabus, but "aspects of language that are essential to meeting the functional performance outcomes outlined in the *CLB*."

The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework outlines the theoretical underpinnings:

> ...The theoretical background and philosophical foundation on which Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 was built as well as the *CLB* assessment /evaluation rating scales, an overview of the *CLB* global profiles of Benchmarks 1-12, a glossary of terms, and a bibliography (Retrieved December 15, 2004, from www.language.ca).

The one formal study related to *CLB* implementation to date, Fleming's (1998) study, explored instructors' assessments of the value of their own autonomy in curriculum decision-making and their concerns when starting to implement the *CLB*. Drawing on theoretical definitions of autonomy, agency, and curriculum decision-making, and the conceptual history of the teaching situation, Fleming collected data in a series of interviews with five instructors. An analysis of the data identified key themes and issues concerning teacher autonomy in the teaching situation. The study revealed the concerns of the group of instructors, at the point of their implementation of the *CLB*, to be curriculum decisions pertinent to their classes such as classroom activities, degree of adherence to curriculum guidelines, selection of linguistic elements to teach, selection of materials,

assessment of learners' needs and English proficiency, professional development opportunities, and thematic content. The findings make the case for developing program supports for instructor "autonomy."

In 2003, I wrote a report on a *CLB* implementation study that I had undertaken as an assignment for a qualitative research course at the University of Manitoba (Koreen, 2003). The purpose of that study was to find out if teachers perceived any changes in their conceptions of teaching, approaches, or classroom practices while implementing the *CLB*. It served as a pilot for this research. For that study, I interviewed seven teachers. Five of the teachers were interviewed as a group. My findings indicated that the five participants perceived that there had been a change in both their conceptions of AESL teaching and their classroom practices. Their understanding of communicative competence had been broadened. That broadened understanding had led to a new approach to teaching AESL. They saw a need to address all the competencies that made up their new understanding of communicative competence. To do so, they had adopted a communicative, task-based approach. The participants had surveyed their students for the real life tasks that their students needed to perform and had then begun to facilitate their students' learning to perform those tasks in a manner appropriate to their students' language proficiency levels. Their criteria for success had changed. Getting the message across successfully had become the main criterion for success. The fluency of the message had become more important than the grammatical accuracy. Inaccuracy was

now being addressed when it interfered with meaning. Language components were now being taught in context, when student errors signaled a problem or the meaning of the message was obscured (Koreen, 2003, p.18).

Curriculum Implementation and Innovation

Of relevance for this study is Fullan and Pomfret's (1977) identification of the user perspective on implementation. They reviewed research on curriculum and instruction implementation, focusing on the definition of implementation, variables which may affect implementation, and ways of evaluating implementation. Fullan and Pomfret (1977) described the user perspective, favored as the one most effective for high degrees of implementation:

> ...The user perspective assumes that users should decide or co-decide what innovations to implement and how to implement them. There is likely to be relatively low or flexible a priori explicitness of innovations. The implementation process is seen as one of specifying the characteristics of implementation and of developing ways of using them. Re-socialization occurs as a result of this process. Thus, users are co-deciders in both sub-stages of implementation. (p. 380)

In contrast is the managerial perspective, in which users are seen as advisors who are to be retrained, who will assist in this retraining by

providing information to facilitate retraining. The managerial perspective requires, for success, a high degree of a priori explicitness (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977, p. 379-381). From the managerial perspective, "Implementation is seen as a problem of getting users to adhere to previously identified characteristics" (p. 379-380). Fullan and Pomfret (1977) offer the following assessment of recent trends in curriculum reforms:

> ...Our assessment of the trend in most recent curriculum reforms is that a priori explicitness is difficult if not impossible, and undesirable, because they usually require a high degree of user input (e.g., inquiry and self-directed learning). (p.381)

The user perspective appears more compatible with what Pettis (1998) found to be the most prevalent conception of teaching held by Manitoba AESL teachers, the art/craft conception of teaching, described below.

Four policy recommendations were made by Fullan and Pomfret (1977) as a result of their review. First, develop broad-based implementation programs that provide support for locally-developed forms of implementation so that users see the program as clear and explicit. Second, encourage local experimentation and development of variants of innovation during implementation with the intent of producing goals and means as a result of use. Third, use the evaluation of innovative projects to give feedback to facilitate implementation and local capabilities rather than

to judge success or failure. Fourth, they identified the most important finding in their review:

> ...Effective implementation of social innovations requires time, personal interaction and contacts, in-service training, and other forms of people-based support. Research has shown time and again that there is no substitute for the primacy of personal contact among implementers, and between implementers and planners/consultants, if the difficult process of unlearning old roles and learning new ones is to occur. (p.391)

I first read Markee's (1997) work on curriculum implementation in 1998 as I prepared for my new job as the program support person for forty teachers who were implementing the *CLB*. I found Markee's (1997) work very enlightening at that time. As I continued my work in program support for six years, I often found myself thinking about what Markee had written about curriculum implementation, and it continued to illuminate for me what I was observing and to inform what I was doing. I consider it relevant to this study for three reasons: its theoretical framework, its relation to other models and studies, and its interchangeable use of *innovation* and *change.* The theoretical framework integrates different aspects of innovation and relates well to the other studies or models reviewed below. Markee's (1997) reference to curriculum implementation as *diffusion of innovation* and interchangeable use of *innovation* and *change* is useful for this study because potential adopters of an innovation may see an innovation as new,

or they may see it as a reworking of familiar ideas into new relationships (p. 47). Because of the subjective nature of "newness", what is new to one person may seem to another to be a reworking of familiar ideas into new relationships.

Markee (1997) reiterated what Fullan had said:

> The relationship between beliefs and behaviour is reciprocal--trying new practices sometimes leads to questioning one's underlying beliefs; examining one's beliefs can lead to attempting new behaviour (Fullan as cited in Markee 1997, p. 54).

I found a similar idea in Tsui (2003):

> Teachers' knowledge shapes their classroom practices, but their classroom practices shape their knowledge, as they reflect on their practices during and after the action, and come to a new understanding of teaching. This kind of reframing of teacher knowledge is particularly evident when teachers come across problems and puzzling situations.... There is a dialectical relation between teachers' knowledge and their world of practice. As teachers respond to their contexts of work and reflect on their practices, they come to a new understanding of teaching and learning. The knowledge that they develop in this process constitutes part of the contexts in which they operate and part of their world of practice (p. 65-66).

Markee (1997) develops (from Cooper) a theoretical framework for understanding curricular innovation by answering the question "Who adopts what, where, when, why, and how?"

> Answering the question "Who adopts what, where, when, why, and how?" involves defining curricular innovation and examining the social roles of different stakeholders and the phases potential users go through as they evaluate whether to adopt an innovation. Innovation is a timebound phenomenon, and change is always constrained by sociocultural factors, individuals' psychological profiles, and the attributes that potential adopters perceive a given innovation to possess. (p. 68-69)

Diffusion of innovation from the program director/change agent's perspective is described in Markee (1997):

> ...Curricular innovation is a managed process of development whose principal products are teaching (and/or testing) materials, methodological skills, and pedagogical values that are perceived as new by potential adopters (p.46).

As teachers try these new practices, they need support, as Fleming (1998) found above, and as did Scott (1994). Scott's (1994) model integrates staff development and curriculum implementation. Most importantly, it recognizes the pivotal role that teachers play in curriculum implementation and states that teachers must have a role in staff development decisions:

> The teacher is ultimately the one who controls not only the rate but also the degree of change in any curriculum... Among the fundamental functions that the teacher as implementation agent must perform is planning for the use of the curriculum within a given situation. (p. 157-158)

McCormick, Steckler and McLeroy (1995) makes a strong argument that second-hand training is not enough for an innovation to be effectively implemented. Their study found that individuals must be present at the training session, rather than have the information diffused through existing networks. Multiple training sessions over time may provide more information about the innovation, allowing educators to get feedback about their previous practice and increase their efficacy (p.217).

This finding of McCormick *et al.* (1995) is congruent with Markee's (1997) theory that the trialability and adaptability of an innovation are important attributes. Hughes and Keith (1980) had studied the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the attributes of an innovation – its relative advantage over the previous curriculum; its compatibility with their values, experience, and needs; its trialability; and observability -- and the degree of its implementation. They had also found that teachers' perception of the trialability of an innovation—the possibility of being able to experiment with it on a limited basis – was found to correlate positively with the degree of its implementation (p. 48). Teachers want the opportunity to try out an

innovation, discuss it, and adapt it to their own situations before making a commitment to it.

Pennington's (1995) study further supports the idea that teachers want to be involved in implementation decisions. Eight Hong Kong secondary teachers with at least six years' teaching experience adopted an innovation practice, teaching three units of process writing lessons over a six-month period. The teachers, with training and ongoing support, learned about the innovation, taught three units of process writing, and reflected on the outcomes for themselves and their students. While teaching the three units, the teachers kept diaries as a record and a source of reflection on the effects of their experiences on their thinking, teaching, and students' learning. Monthly meetings were videotaped and transcribed as a record of training and data on teachers' problems and concerns. Teachers filled out questionnaires before and after the focused implementation period as an assessment of the changes they underwent. They were also observed three times, once during each unit, with follow-up discussions and written feedback given as input to their reflective strategies (p. 711-712). From her analysis of the data, Pennington (1995) produced a model for teacher change:

> We can see a shift from a focus on procedural concerns to more interpersonal concerns, including concerns with their own and students' feelings, roles, and responsibilities. This progression from a focus on technical matters to matters involving reactions, roles,

relationships was followed by a shift toward conceptual matters of explanation and systematization of each teacher's changing views and teaching practices into a coherent, regrounded method. In the process, the teacher as well as the method changed, as the educational innovation was adapted, not merely adopted (p. 727).

Like Markee (1997), Pennington (1995) sees the adoption of innovation as a developmental process:

> Development is context interactive, as external influences are incorporated into the teacher's own world, and the teaching context is made to fit the individual teacher's conceptual model of how and what that teacher wants the classroom to be. (p. 728)

The importance of the trialability of the innovation that Markee (1997) outlined was borne out in Pennington (1995) as well. The trialability of the process writing innovation was essential to its implementation. It gave teachers the opportunity to work with the innovation, discuss it, modify it, and develop a sense of ownership.

The McCormick *et al.* (1995) study and Pennington's (1995) study support the idea that teacher training and ongoing support are essential to implementation. Teacher training and ongoing support nurtured the developmental process of implementation in both cases.

That innovations are rarely adopted as is, but are modified by end users to suit their needs is asserted by Markee (1997) and confirmed by Cray (1997). Cray's study of how LINC language policy is realized in the

classroom concludes that, when a language policy is developed and mandated by individuals far removed from the classroom, there may be important differences between what the policies dictate and what teachers do in their classrooms. Teachers may perceive policies in ways that are determined by the local situations in which they teach (Cray, 1997, p. 22). These conclusions underscore the predictive value of teacher training for successful implementation noted by McCormick *et al.* (1995), and the importance of the sociocultural context of innovation of which change agents must be aware -- the cultural, political, administrative, educational, and institutional factors in which the innovation has to operate (Markee 1997).

Markee's (1997) assertion that innovations are rarely adopted as is is borne out in Fleming (1998):

> Adult ESL curriculum development in the settlement context is a complicated phenomena [sic], especially since the advent of communicative language teaching and the falling out of favour of the methods approach. Few aspects of ESL curriculum can be taken for granted, or represented as simple formulas. ESL instructors can no longer simply take furnished curricula and implement it in the classroom without modification. Indeed, the failure of the methods approach makes it questionable whether this was ever the case. (p. 94)

Sharman's (1987) study supports the hypothesis that the more organizational support teachers receive to assist with implementation, the greater the degree of implementation. Support by principals through evaluation and the creation of conditions favouring implementation through staff development and supervision were significantly related to implementation (p.245). This finding is supported by the above conclusions of McCormick *et al.* (1995) and Pennington (1995) concerning the importance of organizational climate on implementation and the importance of teacher training and ongoing support as predictors of implementation.

Teacher Expertise

As I spoke with the participants and explored their perceptions, their great AESL experience and expertise made me feel that research on expertise was an area that I should explore in my literature review. That brought me to Tsui (2003). In her literature review preceding her case studies of four ESL teachers, Tsui (2003) explored three questions about teacher expertise:

> What are the critical differences among expert, experienced, and novice teachers? How does a teacher become an expert teacher? What are the critical factors that shaped the development of expertise? (p. 245)

In reviewing theories and frequently-cited studies of teacher expertise, Tsui (2003) found that the literature focused on three major

aspects of teacher expertise: the characteristics of expert performance; the features critical to the distinction between experts, novices, and experienced non-experts; and the process through which expertise is developed and nurtured. Tsui points out that all theories agree that experience and practice are essential in teachers' acquisition of expertise that results in automatic, effortless, and fluid performance. Tsui (2003) summarized the characteristics of expert teachers:

> Expert teachers are more efficient in planning and more selective in information processing. They are also able to recognize meaningful patterns quickly. They demonstrate more autonomy and flexibility in both planning and teaching. Because they have a large repertoire of routines on which to rely, they are able to improvise and respond to the needs of the students and the situation very quickly. The automaticity that is made possible by the availability of these routines allows them to direct their attention to more important information. Similar to experts in other domains, these characteristics of their cognitive processes are very much related to their sophisticated knowledge schemata and knowledge base. (p. 41)

However, there is considerable variation of opinion about the features that distinguish the experts from the novices and the experienced non-experts. Debates involve the nature of expert knowledge, the roles of reflection and conscious deliberation, and the role of intuitive and routinized

performance. Tsui (2003) outlined Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1993) theory of expertise:

> Expertise, according to them, is a process, rather than a state, in which experts keep extending the upper edge of their competence by setting for themselves very high standards and working very hard to reach these standards. Bereiter and Scardamalia see the development and maintenance of expertise as a process in which experts continuously reinvest their mental resources, freed up by the acquisition of relevant knowledge through experience, in problematizing what is taken as routine, in reformulating problems and solving them. Their conceptualization of expertise as a process rather than a state provides a new perspective for understanding expertise that departs from the way it has been understood in expert-novice comparisons. (p. 21-2)

This process view of expertise appears compatible with Kumaravadivelu's postmethod pedagogical framework.

Postmethod Pedagogy

Kumaravadivelu (2001) proposed " the need to go beyond the limitations of the concept of method...and...the need to go beyond the transmission model of teacher education" (p. 537) to a postmethod pedagogy or theory of practice that is " 'an ongoing, living, working theory' (Chambers, 1992, p. 13) involving continual reflection and action" (p. 541). Kumaravadivelu (2003) provided "a three-dimensional system consisting of

pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility" (p. 34). The parameter of particularity facilitates a pedagogy that is context-sensitive and location-specific, based on understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political factors. Practicality aims to enable and encourage teachers to theorize from their practice and to practice what they theorize, i.e., to generate their own theory of practice. Possibility draws on the sociopolitical consciousness of participants and functions as a catalyst for continual identity formation and social transformation. The three parameters overlap, interweave, and interact with each other in a synergistic relationship (Kumaravadivelu 2003, p. 37). He states that "teachers can become autonomous only to the extent they are willing and able to embark on a continual process of self-development "(Kumaravadivelu 2001, p. 549), that teachers have to change their attitudes and beliefs in addition to their methods and materials, (Kumaravadivelu 2001, p. 555) and that "a postmethod pedagogy will always remain a work in progress" (Kumaravadivelu 2001, p. 556).

Paradigm Shift and Educational Change

From that brief review, it appears that both teachers and curricula change during successful curriculum implementation. Markee (1997) concurs and links changes in curriculum and behaviour to changes in conceptions of teaching:

> The idea that the relationship between beliefs and behaviour is reciprocal has obvious implications for the teacher and curriculum

> development. If we accept the idea that teachers should "behave their way into new skills and ideas, not just think their way into them" (Fullan 1993, p. 15), then this suggests that change agents can use syllabus design and materials development by teachers as a convenient entry point into the larger process of curriculum innovation. Materials are the most tangible products of innovation. However, innovation must also engage teachers in the more abstract tasks of developing their own methodological skills and changing their ideas about what constitutes good teaching (Markee 1997, p. 54).

In line with that idea, one workshop in the Manitoba *CLB* implementation strategy involved teachers in developing core language learning objectives. How Manitoba teachers' methodological skills and conceptions of teaching have changed as a result of implementing the *CLB* is the question this study addresses.

Jacobs & Farrell (2001) describe such changes in perspective as paradigm shifts:

> When a paradigm shift takes place, we see things from a different perspective as we focus on different aspects of the phenomena in our lives. (p.1)

Conceptions of Teaching

Using Zahorik's (1986) framework, Freeman & Richards (1993) reviewed prevalent conceptions of English-as-a-Second-Language teaching. Zahorik had classified conceptions of teaching into three categories (science/research, theory/philosophy, and art/craft). Freeman & Richards's (1993) intention was to shift discussion from a focus on behavior/activity of teachers to the teacher thinking and reasoning that motivated their teaching practices.

Freeman & Richards (1993) found that "The idea of a conception of teaching is a thorny one" (p. 194). They noted three commonalities found in the definitions used by educational researchers. The definitions connoted "*comprehensive, organized,* and *unified* bodies of knowledge about an object, idea, or phenomenon" (p. 194) and noted that some researchers feel that conceptions of teaching affect people's practices and performance (p. 194).

Employing Freeman and Richards's (1993) conceptions of teaching based on Zahorik in a study of Manitoba AESL teachers in government-funded programs, Pettis (1998) found that the largest number of teachers (55) held an art/craft conception of Adult ESL teaching, while 34 held a science/research conception, and 39 a theory/ values-based conception. (Pettis 1998, p. 90) Freeman & Richards (1993) described the art/craft conception:

> Art/craft conceptions portray teaching as a unique set of personal skills which teachers apply in different ways according to the demands of specific situations. Thus, in this view, methods of teaching are not generalizable. Rather, teachers seek to develop an approach to teaching which is often referred to as eclectic; the aim is to allow teachers to be themselves and to act on their own best understanding of what is happening in the classroom. (p. 196)

Or, as Zahorik (1986) had described the art/craft conception:

> The essence of this view of good teaching is invention and personalization. A good teacher is a person who assesses the needs and possibilities of a situation and creates and uses practices that have promise for that situation. (p. 22)

Chambers's (1992) "ongoing, living, working" conception of teaching cited in Kumaravadivelu (2001) is congruent with Tsui (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2001), and what Zahorik (1986) and Freeman & Richards (1993) described as art/craft conceptions of teaching. In view of Pettis's (1998) findings that the majority of Manitoba AESL teachers hold an art/craft conception of teaching, I believed that exploring with the participants their perceptions of whether their conceptions of teaching, approaches, or classroom practices changed during implementation of the *CLB* would be an interesting undertaking.

METHOD

Form of Inquiry

My desire was to hear from teachers about their conceptions of teaching, their approaches to adult ESL teaching, and their classroom practices while implementing the Canadian Language Benchmarks (*CLB*). I wanted to hear them describe in their own words their perceptions of whether or not there had been changes in how they conceptualized their teaching and of any changes they had made in their teaching approaches or classroom practices. I was interested in hearing of the nature of the changes that had taken place in their thinking about language teaching and learning and in their classrooms. I thought, like Birell-Bertrand (2004), that the collective case study research method, " studying several cases within the same project" (Stake 1995, p. 169), would be the most appropriate method to accomplish that:

> ...I saw the collective case study research method as a means of *exploring* rather than *answering* my research question. I make this distinction because of the positivistic implication of one correct answer that is attached to answering a research question, and due to the nature of my research it was never my intention to find one definitive answer to my research question. (Birell-Bertrand, 2004, p.50)

The Study

Site and Participant Selection

The site of my research was the classroom in which the AESL teachers normally taught, surroundings familiar to them and in which they would be at ease. We met at the end of the teaching day, which allowed me to accommodate their schedules and save them travel time. The teachers were employed in a large urban AESL program (approximately 1000 students in *CLB* levels 1 to 8) which used the *CLB* as a framework to teach AESL in the context of settlement - English for community participation, employment preparation, and preparation for further education in an English-speaking milieu. In addition to the regular AESL stream, the program included an AESL literacy stream.

The participants were to be 12 teachers who had participated in the *CLB* implementation process that began in 1996. They had attended a series of Committee on the Assessment of Language in Manitoba (CALM)-designed workshops (Please see Appendix A for details of the workshops). They had also taken part in in-house professional development sessions and used the *CLB* as a basis to develop AESL curricula. They were to be teaching or to have taught at a variety of different *CLB* levels and in both regular and literacy streams in the program.

All the teachers who volunteered to participate in my study fit the above criteria and were selected for interviews. Although my original goal was to interview 12 teachers, and 12 enthusiastic teachers did indeed

volunteer, the demands on teachers' time and flu seasons resulted in some attrition, and I was able to interview only eight.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Bertaux (1981), eight participants are sufficient if they yield enough information to produce informational redundancy:

> ...It is sufficient when the amount of new information provided per unit of added resource expenditure has reached the point of diminishing returns (that is, it would not be profitable to add even one more sample element). (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 234)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested using redundancy as a criterion for assessing when enough information has been gathered:

> Redundancy is typically eschewed in life, but in this instance it is a most useful criterion: Repeat until redundancy – and then just one more time for safety. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 219)

When I found that the same themes were recurring in the interviews, and that little new information was being gleaned, I decided that the eight interviews were sufficient. I believe that the interview material achieved the informational redundancy that Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended as a criterion for assessing when a sufficient number of participants have been interviewed.

Finding participants was not difficult because the topic of *CLB* implementation was certainly salient to these teachers, and they were eager to discuss their experiences. My greatest challenge lay in scheduling

interviews with the teachers who volunteered to participate. They were, as a group, very busy, hardworking, experienced teachers active in both their professional and personal lives. They were so busy that, at the conclusion of the first few interviews, making appointments to do member checks proved unworkable. I resorted to summing up for the participants, at the end of the interviews, what it was that I thought I had heard them say, and inviting them to clarify any misunderstandings. This proved satisfactory to both the participants and me.

Stake (1995) eschews audiotaping and transcribing interviews, preferring that the interviewer "reconstruct the account and submit it to the respondent for accuracy and stylistic improvement" (p.66). He says, "Getting the exact words of the respondent is usually not very important. It is what they mean that is important" (p. 66). Although I chose to tape and transcribe, not willing to trust to memory, I believe that the summing up at the end of the interview served to confirm the participant's meaning.

Negotiating Entry and Obtaining Informed Consent

In order to begin collecting data, it was necessary to obtain first the approval of the administration of the school division in which the teachers and I worked. As Stake (1995) suggests, I made known, in written form, "the nature of the case study, the sponsor, the activity intended, the primary issues, the time span..., burden to the parties..., plans for distribution,...[and] any plan to anonymize" (Stake, 1995, p. 57). When I

explained the study to the principal and vice-principal of the AESL program, both of them approved and encouraged it. They then explained that I would also have to obtain the approval of the school division's ethics committee. Once I had obtained the approval of the school division's ethics committee, I received permission from the AESL program administrator to speak to teachers at the end of a staff meeting.

At the end of their staff meeting, I explained the study to the teachers briefly, answered their questions, and invited them to speak with me further individually and to volunteer as participants. I also provided copies of the informed consent form for their information. Some teachers approached me at the conclusion of the meeting, eager to participate. Others were interested but had questions that they wished to discuss individually. Because they were already acquainted with me, some phoned me with their individual questions or discussed them with me in chance meetings. I'm grateful that throughout the study, the participants made me welcome and did their utmost to be available to meet with me, sometimes scheduling and rescheduling meetings weeks in advance in order to accommodate me.

For my part, I attempted to accommodate the participants as much as possible by varying the number of times that we met according to their preferences. Some of them met with me only once, for 1 to 2 hours. Others met with me twice, once to discuss their individual questions, and later to be interviewed. Still others met with me more than once just to complete the interview.

It is important to discuss my position within the above program. Because of my title in the program, readers may perceive a conflict in my interviewing these participants. As AESL department head, a program support position, I had facilitated implementation of the *CLB* in the years leading up to my study. It is important to understand that, within The Winnipeg School Division, a department head position is not a supervisory one, but a program support role. I had no role in the evaluation of teachers. Rather, my role was to review the program and provide for its continual improvement by ensuring that appropriate supports and resources were made available to teachers. For further discussion of this point, please see the Limitations section.

Conducting the Research

A Holistic Approach

Normally, the data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the written report (thesis) phases of research are quite distinct from one another. However, I knew that this would not be the case with my study. Because of the time constraints of the professional lives of the participants, the need to schedule appointments with participants weeks in advance, and the occasional opportunity to devote unbroken blocks of time to my research, I realized that the phases would have to overlap somewhat. I transcribed participant interviews as soon as possible after their completion, a challenging task when several interviews occurred in one week.

While transcribing or interviewing, I began to analyze the data, before completing all the interviews, just as Stake (1995) describes it:

> There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as compilations.... Qualitative study capitalizes on ordinary ways of making sense. Each person has a great deal of experience encountering strange objects and phenomena. (Stake 1995, pp. 71-72)

As I transcribed the early interviews, I began to identify themes that were emerging from the interviews and to recognize them as they recurred in interviews with other participants. Sometimes an emerging theme would inspire a new direction to explore in my literature review or to probe in a coming interview. Although I had begun work on my literature review before the data collection, I continued it throughout the research and analysis phases, a practice that I believe has enriched all three phases. I feel that the blending of the phases served to mutually enlighten them. However, as is customary, I will describe each phase separately below.

Data Collection

Because my intention was to allow the participant as much freedom as possible in responding, Nunan's (1992) description of the semi-structured interview format interested me:

> In the semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a general idea of where he or she wants the interview to go, and what should come

> out of it, but does not enter the interview with a set of predetermined questions. Topics and issues rather than questions determine the course of the interview...Because of its flexibility, the semi-structured interview has found favour with many researchers, particularly those working within an interpretive research tradition.... It gives the interviewer a degree of power and control over the interview...[and] a great deal of flexibility. (p. 149-150)

The Interview Process

As mentioned earlier, there was great variation in the number and length of the interviews. For that reason, rather than referring to first, second, or third interviews, I will refer to the interview process. All of the interviews were taped and then transcribed. During the interview process, I made a few written notes to record some general impressions.

At the beginning of the interview process, I began the individual interviews by chatting casually with the participants. In this first phase of the interview, I met with the participants individually to review the consent form with them to make sure that they understood it and to gather background information on each participant. Sometimes I gathered background information on the participant later in the process if the participant was eager to begin discussion of the research topic. I answered any questions that they had about the consent form or the study, and asked them to sign the informed consent form (Please see Appendix B). Some participants had already signed it prior to the interview because their questions had already

been answered in the staff meeting or in a chance meeting with me. Participants understood the consent form quite readily, especially the participant who had done Master's research. Participants' concerns usually involved protection of their privacy.

In the second phase of the interview process, I began to explore the participants' perceptions of changes in their approaches, classroom practices, and conceptions of teaching in implementing the *CLB*. . As suggested by Stake (1995), and by Babbie (2001), I began the interview by asking each participant to respond to my open-ended primary interview questions. The specific questions are listed below:

Has anything changed in the way you think about teaching, particularly your conception of what good ESL teaching is?

Has implementing the Benchmarks changed how you teach or how you think about teaching ESL?

What's changed, in your classroom practices, if anything, since we've been implementing Benchmarks?

Do you think your conception of ESL teaching has changed since the Benchmarks?

During the interview, I used probes to clarify or expand the information the participant provided (Please see Appendix C for probes). I found that the following questions were also helpful in assisting participants in making connections between their out-of-classroom practices and in-classroom practices:

What would that look like in your classroom?

What would I see in your classroom?

How does that play out in your classroom?

In the final phase of the interviews, I summed up for the participants what I thought that I had heard them say, and invited them to make any clarifications or additions.

Introducing the Participants

Because of my background in the AESL field in Manitoba, I was acquainted with virtually all of the pool of potential participants, the teachers who had had the benefit of the entire CALM-designed implementation strategy and in-house professional development. In addition, I was working on the same staff as the majority of the teachers in that pool, as a program support person whose primary responsibility was facilitating the implementation of the *CLB* framework.

I considered it crucial to include background information on the participants so that information on the participants and the context of the study would be available in the future for anyone wishing to do further analysis or to replicate the study. To protect participants' privacy, I have used pseudonyms.

Ardythe

Ardythe is a seasoned ESL teacher (20+ years in AESL) who started her career as an elementary school teacher. When she started teaching AESL, she had no formal training in AESL or in second language teaching.

She began by teaching AESL part time, nurturing her professional development through the support of her colleagues and through in-service training. In time, AESL literacy became her particular professional interest. As she earned her graduate degree in education, she made AESL literacy learners her focus. Now one of the most knowledgeable AESL Literacy teachers in Canada, she presents at local and national conferences, is a published AESL literacy author, and is currently working on several AESL projects, in addition to her full time daily teaching responsibilities.

Donna

Like several other study participants, Donna began her teaching career in primary and elementary education. She started by teaching a kindergarten/grade 1 split class and taught classes from kindergarten to grade 4 levels for nine years. Following up on a friend's suggestion that she explore AESL, she began her 20-year career in both regular AESL and AESL literacy. Since the release of the *CLB*, she has participated in *CLB* curriculum development and materials development projects.

Joanne

Having started her teaching career as an elementary school teacher, Joanne, another AESL veteran, "got into ESL quite by accident." On a hot August day in 1980, tired of "talking only to children and writing grocery lists," she decided to return to university. It was too late to register for the education courses she wanted, but she learned that she could register for a TESL course that had a later registration deadline. She asked, "What's

TESL?" Satisfied with the response that she received to her question, she took the TESL course and began her TESL career. Having started teaching AESL part time, as so many participants did, Joanne now teaches full time. She has taught at levels equivalent to *CLB* 1-6 and ESL literacy and participated in *CLB* curriculum development projects.

Laura

Laura's 30-year teaching career started with teaching Grade 3. After a brief stint in the travel industry, she tried AESL at a relative's suggestion and has been in AESL ever since. Laura had some formal training in adult education before beginning to work in AESL, but the bulk of her AESL expertise was acquired on the job, through professional development, in materials development project work, and through her involvement with local and national TESL professional organizations. Laura is currently co-authoring a *CLB*-related textbook.

Marilyn

Marilyn taught in youth programs for 12 years before getting her teaching degree. After formal teacher training, she was a substitute teacher in K-9 for two years. Her reasons for moving into AESL were "the thrill of working with adults who really wanted to learn...freedom to explore, to learn, and to grow...no curriculum really...the staff was great, and the hours worked well with family responsibilities." With almost 25 years' experience in AESL now, she has taught in both regular AESL and AESL literacy programs large and small -- part time and full time, participated in all the

professional development sessions mandated by her employers and her programs' funders, worked on *CLB* curriculum development projects, and developed a student website. She currently trains volunteers to work in programs that use the *CLB* framework and teaches some community-based language training classes.

Melissa

Melissa started her career teaching grade 6 for nine and a half years. In 1979, she began her AESL career in continuing education evening classes, during the huge influx of Vietnamese boat people. Like Ardythe, she started teaching AESL without any formal ESL or second language training or support of any kind. She was not even able to observe another AESL teacher before she started to teach her first class! She credits the considerable expertise that she quickly gained to her colleagues' generosity in sharing their experience and advice (Some of them had second language teaching training and/or experience, though not usually in ESL). She has taught in both regular and literacy AESL classes. In addition to sharing ideas and materials with colleagues, she has found in-service professional development to be a great resource. She teaches approximately 25 hours per week, is active in her professional association, has worked on several *CLB*-related curriculum development projects, and is co-authoring a *CLB*-related textbook.

Van

Van has over 25 years of varied teaching experience: She taught junior high language arts, music, and drama for four years and all subjects in grades 6-8 in a parochial school for three years, and has been in AESL "about 20 years." With a degree in Russian Language with a concentration in speech, and a minor in music, Van started to teach AESL in 1985 "for the adventure," without any formal TESL training, and has found it "a rewarding and challenging career."

Willow

Willow has been teaching for 22 years, 18 of them in AESL. In her first years of teaching, S1 to S4 (grades 9-12) language arts and history, she completed her pre-master's in the teaching of reading, taking AESL courses as part of her program. Curious, having learned about the AESL program from a friend, she entered AESL teaching as a volunteer. With broad experience in AESL and AESL literacy, curriculum development, materials development, and co-authoring a prominent *CLB* literacy document, Willow brings formidable expertise to her current preferred area of teaching, low level AESL literacy, particularly the Foundations level.

There are a number of features that the participants share. They are all experienced certified teachers, have university degrees, and have participated in CALM-designed *CLB* implementation training, in-house *CLB* professional development sessions, and a variety of *CLB*-related projects. Each has taught a variety of *CLB* levels in both regular and literacy streams.

Data Analysis

Collecting and interpreting the data is crucial to the quality of the study. As Gay (1996) points out:

> The whole point is not to get answers to a predetermined set of standardized questions, but rather to find out where "they" are coming from, what they have experienced, feel, believe, and so forth. (p. 224)

As I participated in, listened to, transcribed, and reread the interviews, I listened for thoughts, ideas, and topics that emerged and recurred in and across the interviews, i.e., themes. As the themes emerged or recurred, I developed one-word or phrasal codes to represent them and noted them in the margins of the transcripts. Because all the transcriptions and notes were typed on my computer, it was very convenient to use the "find" command to locate the codes and recurring themes as I analyzed the data. I also used a technique described in Fawcett-Frain (1989) -- I reread the transcriptions as I listened to the audiotapes, listening to the participants' voices. After I had transcribed all the individual interviews, I reread them all and analyzed them further. As each participant emphasized a theme or repeated it, I was able to discern the importance of it to the participant. The major themes were identified according to the emphasis that I judged the participants had given them. As they recurred in and across the participants' interviews, I began to develop questions in my mind about the relationships between and among the major themes.

Research Considerations and Concerns

At the research proposal stage, several issues of concern to me arose, specifically m*y* position in relation to the teachers and the extensive teaching experience of the participants.

My Position in Relation to the Participants

A serious concern was that the participants, knowing my enthusiasm for the *CLB*, might tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. However, because I was acquainted with the participants and knew their level of involvement with the *CLB* and their professionalism, I had confidence that their enthusiasm for participating in the research was a result of that professionalism, rather than a desire to look good or to please me.

Balanced against that concern was the ease of finding participants. I had an immediate indication of interest in participating in the study when I met with the teachers to explain my research project. As I explained the study and answered their questions, I could see their growing interest in participating. Some teachers approached me at the conclusion of the meeting, eager to participate. The issue of establishing a trust relationship with them was minimal because they already knew me as a fellow AESL teacher. I thought over Stake's (1995) advice. He said:

> The first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn. Given our purposes, which cases are likely to lead us to understandings, to assertions, perhaps even to modifying of generalizations? Our time

> and access for fieldwork are almost always limited. If we can, we need to pick cases that are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can be identified and actors (the people studied) willing to comment on certain draft materials. (p. 4)

I decided that my familiarity with the potential participants would be an asset to the research.

The Teaching Experience of the Participants

Another concern was about typicality. I wondered how typical of Canadian teachers my group of participants was and whether my findings might be generalizable and helpful to readers. Because the Manitoba *CLB* implementation process began in 1996, one of the criteria for participants, that they had participated in the entire process, meant that it would not be possible to interview teachers with little AESL experience. The pool of potential participants was necessarily limited to teachers with considerable experience in AESL and with the *CLB*. Further, the mean age of Manitoba AESL teachers also almost guaranteed that participants were very experienced teachers. But the mean age of Canadian teachers is similar, so perhaps typicality was not actually an issue. I did, however, manage to include teachers who were teaching a variety of *CLB* levels and who had a variety of teaching backgrounds. Stake (1995) is not concerned about typicality:

> Of course we need to carefully consider the uniqueness and contexts of the alternative selections, for these may aid or restrict our learnings. But many of us caseworkers feel that good instrumental case study does not depend on being able to defend the typicality. (Stake 1995, p. 4)

Having chosen to do a qualitative study using a collective case study method, my primary goal was to explore and understand the participants' situation, not to generate typical or generalizable results. Having addressed my concerns about my position in relation to the participants and about the issue of typicality to my satisfaction, I was eager to begin examining the transcripts and analyzing them.

RESULTS

Analysis of Emergent Themes

Carefully examining the transcripts of the interviews, I looked for the repetition of common themes in and across the transcripts, as described in Chapter 3. The themes clustered into five main themes: a broadened understanding of communicative competence; lesson planning; responding to the functional language needs of students; teaching in context; and assessment. An important subtext signaling changes in the participant - student relationship also surfaced.

Broadened Understanding of Communicative Competence

In the interviews, all but one of the participants spoke of how a broadened understanding of communicative competence had an effect on how they thought about language teaching and on their AESL teaching (Please see Appendix D for the Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell model of communicative competence). In fact, they usually mentioned it first. The participants shifted their focus away from grammar-based teaching to communicative competence. The "other" aspects of communicative competence (other than the linguistic aspect) -- the strategic, actional, discourse and sociocultural competencies -- had become much more prominent in their understanding of communicative competence, and linguistic competence (focus on grammar) less prominent, compared to its former role. The participants' responses indicated to me that they had not only more understanding of communicative competence, but also more

confidence in their teaching and a greater feeling of autonomy and authority.

Van's broadened understanding took her beyond a focus on grammar to looking at all the competencies that inform communicative competence. It made her conscious of new aspects of language. She particularly commented on discourse competency:

> ...This word "discourse." When that came up in Benchmarks, I think the teachers were kind of hung up on it, but you know...the discourse, the connections...the way we say things...This word "ellipsis:" Oh, sometimes we don't say a complete sentence...All these kinds of conversational things that we say...that are part of building the language in. (Van #38-39).[1]

She started looking at language "in a broader sense"

> ...I think the Benchmarks, the way they're set up, looking at these different competencies, have kind of broadened the teaching. You don't just go in and teach...the grammar point for the day. You try to look at language in a broader sense.... (Van #2)

This broadened understanding made her analyze language and think critically about her teaching:

> ...There's an analysis about language that's happened in the Benchmarks...Before, we weren't looking at *What are we doing here?*

[1] #38-39 indicates that these are the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth utterances in my interview with Van. This system is used throughout the thesis.

It made us look at things, look at the teaching and...the language learning in a bigger way. (Van #3)

She spoke of the professional growth that resulted from her new understanding:

...The Benchmarks have helped us learn about ourselves, learn about our students, analyze the way we do things, and stretch...I like this way. (Van #115)

I attribute the changes that Laura described to her "broader perspective" on the different aspects of language. She shifted her teaching focus from a focus on linguistic competence to a focus on language functions:

I look at my classroom teaching from a broader perspective. It has encouraged me to look at many different aspects of teaching language, some of which I was looking at and using before, but not all of which I was using before, or not using as much as I feel I should be. I now look at my classroom teaching in much more functional...terms. I think of language functions more than language pieces. I think of language functions more than just the grammar, just vocabulary. (Laura #1)

Laura found that the CLB served to organize her approach, provided guidelines that could be shown to students, and integrated her teaching into a consistent whole. She is now better able to articulate for her students and for herself the language tasks that they need to learn to perform:

> ...Now I think, with Benchmarks, it's a much more organized, comprehensive approach. You can show them all the things that they have to do in speaking.... Benchmarks has given us those guidelines to go by. It's just much more organized...not so many loose ends. I think, before, we were trying really hard. When I look back at some of the old materials, we had functions..., vocabulary..., grammar....We had a lot of the pieces. Benchmarks just filled in the gaps. We have a more complete approach. And I think the students must feel that. (Laura #107)

As she addressed the "different parts active in the language" more comprehensively, her confidence in her teaching increased:

> I feel that I'm doing a better job, because I approach it more comprehensively, and more completely. I feel that I'm covering more bases than I was before. (Laura #97)

Melissa felt that her broadened understanding of communicative competence made her lesson planning and teaching address all the competencies and provide her students with functional language that they could use immediately outside the classroom:

> Oh, yes, my classroom practices have changed. I think I have a heightened awareness of all the aspects that go into...the development of a lesson and the actual teaching of a lesson. And, I'd say I am better able to feel that when my students leave the

classroom that they've got something really functional; that they have communicative language to use right away. (Melissa #11)

With her new perspective, Laura came to see addressing all the competencies through task-based instruction as a necessary part of a Benchmarks-compatible curriculum:

> There are many different parts active in the language that I have to address, in getting to the task-based activities and language functions that the Benchmarks require. (Laura #5)

This new understanding of communicative competence enabled Melissa, like Van, to grow professionally by developing a more critical approach to how she teaches:

> It...took me further along. It would be what I wanted to do before. I didn't do that before, whereas now I'm thinking more critically. I think totally differently when I'm putting this all together now. (Melissa #14)

Melissa's critical approach enabled her to see that there were some aspects of communicative competence that she had not been addressing:

> When I think back to when we started, it's really incredible to have the Benchmarks...You know what I think? We were doing some of the things, but I think we, for whatever reason, weren't coming full circle. (Melissa #30-32)

Like Melissa, Marilyn, too, took a more critical approach to her teaching. She became aware that she needed to address more fully all the competencies that comprise communicative competence. In doing so, she

felt that she became aware of what good lesson planning and good teaching involved:

> I certainly branched out and looked at different areas. And realized I wasn't covering them all. I was skimming them, but I wasn't doing a good job. (Marilyn #59)
>
> It stretched my mind. (Marilyn #67)
>
> ...It has changed what I think good teaching is, and good practices...and good planning. (Marilyn #77)

Joanne's frequent need to refer to the CLB implies a similar awareness of the importance of addressing all the aspects of language:

> I think I should go back more often, though, because maybe I'm leaving out the strategies and the discourse. So every once in a while it's a good idea to go back to it. (Joanne # 160)

Donna's understanding of what it is to teach or learn a language has become "broader and clearer." With a greater understanding of the components of communicative competence -- the actional, linguistic, strategic, discourse, and sociocultural aspects of it -- she said that she has become aware of the need to teach communication strategies and both the cultural and the structural aspects of speech acts.

Ardyth's summation underlined what the others had said: "I think about things differently." (Ardyth #31)

Lesson Planning

Not surprisingly, almost immediately after commenting on their new

broadened understanding of communicative competence, participants spoke at length of the changes in their lesson planning, particularly a shift to longer-term, systematic, and complete planning. Participants made a shift to longer-term planning in order to address all the aspects of communicative competence as they involved learners in needs assessment; focused on student-selected settlement themes; sketched out in detail the steps involved in teaching all the skills required to accomplish the language tasks that students indicated that they need to learn to perform; incorporated student feedback; and fine-tuned their plans as they proceeded.

Marilyn found that she needed to do more long term planning in order to address all the aspects of communicative competence and all the skills:

> Has my teaching changed? Yes, since the Benchmarks I'm more thorough...I cover all the skills, where before I had a tendency to do what I thought was fun, and what was enjoyable. (Marilyn #2)

Her planning became longer-term:

> ...It made me get off my rear end and think.... Rather than just grabbing something and saying, *Oh, this looks good. I'm going to do this tomorrow morning....* It made me sit down on weekends and plan a week at a time. It made me sit down...and outline a term. And after the needs assessment, say, *Okay, they've decided that they want medical. What will this include?* And make a long term plan, look at the Benchmarks, fit it in, slot in when I was going to do it, and then proceed with it.... When you're finished, you have the feeling that you

covered all your bases. Or if you hadn't, you knew you hadn't....

Previous to the Benchmarks...I never knew what I was doing....

(Marilyn #77-89)

I believe that Marilyn's longer term lesson planning is related to her awareness of her students' language needs and her confidence in her ability to address them. I think that as Marilyn worked with the *CLB* framework, the connection between the theory of the implementation workshops and her own practice became clearer and that they informed each other:

...I had to sit down with this document and think it through. The other thing that helped was all the in-services that we screamed and complained about...They walked us through the tasks. Sometimes they walked me through before I was ready to go through. And it wasn't until a few months later I realized *Hey, this is what we were doing!* (Marilyn #89)

Joanne's lesson planning also became more long term, less grammar-focused, and more theme-focused:

...I think in the past...it was easier to take a book out, a grammar book, and say "Okay, we're going to do page ninety-four today in this book." ...It was not theme related...but now when I do a theme...I don't prepare every night.... I'll prepare a block of work, and I'll have enough work for maybe a week. And then it doesn't mean it's really finished, but this is what my focus is.... (Joanne #148)

The long-term plan is fine-tuned as the thematic unit is being taught:

> I'll sit down and work from seven to eleven at the computer... and sort of block it all out.... After the lesson, if I want to go home and fit something in, I'll do that, but my big block of work is done. (Joanne #150)

As participants implemented the CLB, they thought more critically about their lesson planning and changed how the went about it -- their planning became more systematic and complete:

> ...It was development. It [CLB] spells out things in a different way and clearly. It's all systematic. It's the step-by-step building. It's complete. If the skill is reading, it breaks it down into the different types of reading and so forth... And so when you plan a lesson..., you just do it in a different way....You know you get kind of caught up sometimes.... Your focus gets taken off in a different direction and you become kind of caught up in something.... After, *Oh my gosh, I needed to go two or three steps further with that.* I didn't do that before. Whereas now I'm thinking more critically, I think totally differently when I'm putting this all together now. (Melissa #13-14)

Melissa builds her lessons step by step:

> What I do when I'm planning a lesson -- after I do my needs assessment, I go through the Benchmarks, go through my objectives. I put things together in term of tasks. *What's this student really got to do? ...Where is this going...?* And then we have to break it into

pieces. Some of it you'll revisit because you don't want to dwell on it too long. *What do they need to know right now?* And then I pull from the core objectives, you pull in your pronunciation, and you pull in your idioms, your pieces of grammar; your structure, your cultural topics, and so on. (Melissa #16)

It's really interesting. When I sit down to do my lessons, I like to plan the whole week. I take one day when I pull my ideas together.... And then I have another day when I sit down and I start putting this together and relating it one to the other.... It's a very, very long process, lesson prepping. It's like you don't have a weekend.... But it's the feedback you get in the classroom when the students are saying, "Thank-you, teacher." That's why you do it.... It's fun, it's creative; I like that. It's never the same. (Melissa # 18-19)

Willow, too, finds that her lesson planning is more long term, more systematic -- her planning sketches out the steps involved in learning to perform the end task. Like Joanne, she fine-tunes her plan as she proceeds:

I find I have to plan in weeks now, more than I did before.... I can't do day by day. If something comes up, fine...we'll add it. But... I have to look at my whole week because it all has to link and...follow.... There has to be that sequence.... You're moving up to get to that task. So you've got to go over this many days until you get there...yeah, I try... I think we always had that spiraling, where we

had to go back and redo and then go a little bit forward, go back, go a little bit forward. But...I think there's...even more linking now because that task is...where you're heading, your goal. (Willow #1-7)

For Joanne, Melissa, and Willow, lesson planning has become a work in progress that responds to the needs of their teaching situations.

Responding to the Functional Language Needs of Students

As the participants spoke of their new broader understanding of communicative competence, their change from a grammar focus to a thematic focus, and changes in their lesson planning, the words "real", "functional" or "function", and "task " kept coming up. They now want to teach their students to perform language tasks and to have their students leave the classroom having learned language for immediate use:

I'd say I am better able to feel that when my students leave the classroom, that they've got something really functional; that they have communicative language to use right away. (Melissa #11)

Participants' desire to teach "real" language is reflected in their focus on "tasks". As Melissa said previously:

After I do my needs assessment,...I put things together in term of tasks.... *What's the task? What are they going to have to say? What are they going to have to read? What are they going to have to write? What are they going to have to listen to?* (Melissa #16)

Willow spoke of planning to teach the "task":

But...I have to look at my whole week because it all has to link and...follow...There has to be that sequence...You're moving up to get to that task. So you've got to go over this many days until you get there... (Willow #3)

Involving Students in Needs Assessment

In order to address the functional language needs of their students, i.e., to teach them to perform the tasks they needed to perform using English, they had to assist students in becoming more involved in their own learning by involving them in needs assessment. Joanne felt that most teachers had always done needs assessment, but felt that the Benchmarks had had the effect of alerting her to the need to involve the students *more* in their own learning:

Diane: But do you feel there's been any influence from the Benchmarks, in how you do needs assessment, or how often you do it, or the feedback you get, or seek, or whatever? Are there differences?

Joanne: ...I don't think so, because we had been talking about needs assessment 'way, 'way, before Benchmarks. (Joanne #81-82)

...We're feeling a need to get students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Benchmarks has kind of made us conscious of functional language.... (Joanne #224)

Somehow we have to convince them that they have to take some responsibility in learning that language, that the teacher is only the

facilitator. I'm trying to convince them that I give them information, and they have to do something with it. (Joanne #229)

As part of needs assessment, Joanne now asks students about their goals:

> I guess we're asking their goals so that they're focusing on what they need in their lives in Canada. (Joanne #227)
>
> And I think that if they're really aware of their goals, then it makes it more relevant to them. (Joanne #231)

Marilyn found that the CLB forced her to look at what and how she was teaching in terms of whether it was answering student needs:

> For years I tended to do what I liked, probably not what the student...needed, but what I liked to do. With Benchmarks, it forced me to look at what I was doing, and say, *This is what the student needs, not what you like.* (Marilyn #61)

She relies heavily on student input from initial and ongoing needs assessment to select themes and topics, rather than doing what she likes or what she only thinks they need:

> Their input is in the needs assessment... And also, after, ..."How did you like this? Did you learn anything from this?" ... I devised a little form too. ..."What did you like?" "What didn't you like?" ...Usually they're very positive. But I had done it thinking *If...there's...a running thread here, something that's not positive, then I need to change it, next time.* (Marilyn #99-103)

Soliciting student input and feedback has resulted in students having more voice:

> ...Students have more voice...and that comes through the needs assessment... It's...ongoing and it happens in class every day. (Marilyn #105-107)

Laura students also have more say in syllabus decisions. Laura's needs assessments used to consist of the students' choosing themes that they wanted to study. Now her students identify the tasks that they want to learn to perform, in addition to choosing the settlement theme that they would like to study:

> ...Before Benchmarks, it would have been, "Do you want to talk about...?" ...I did the content. Now, with Benchmarks, you do the content and then you break it down into functions. They want jobs. "Okay, what do you want to do?" " We want to do interviews." ...I didn't do this before...but now I break it down into, "Okay, what kinds of things do you need to do in an interview?" So again I look at those tasks that they're going to need to do. Before I'd stop at the content...I would sort of decide what we were going to do. But now I think it's good to have the students be involved. (Laura #145)

For Donna, initial and ongoing needs assessment have become much more prominent. She said, "I would say that they now drive the curriculum." Van finds that assessing student needs is also prominent for her:

...Needs assessment...certainly fits into the Benchmarks. *What does this group need?* Sometimes you think, *Oh, isn't this job going to get any easier? ...I can't take page 45 out of my binder and use page 45 next term or...next year....* You're pulling out some new things, building on your old ideas. But maybe you have to come up with something a little different for this group of people... It's a lot of creative energy, and on-the-spot physical energy. (Van #102-105)

Participants reported a need for *ongoing* student input:

Well, I do the needs assessment at the beginning of the term, for the themes.... And then...you know, the student population sometimes changes, so you've got to refocus. (Joanne #62-63)

...When they come to you with a piece of paper and, "I need this," this is what they need...that day. When we do the needs assessment at the beginning of the term, they don't know what they're going to need three weeks from now. (Joanne #209)

...The hard part, is, even if we do a needs assessment...-- we're doing...a theme on education, and somebody doesn't have kids in school, doesn't even care about this information, feels that maybe they're wasting their time on that theme -- the teacher has to convince the student that the theme might be education, but they could use the language elsewhere. (Joanne #231)

"This isn't useful. I don't need this." ...Their feedback about what they like and what they don't like and what works for them...You're constantly keeping your finger on that pulse. (Laura #41)

Teaching Students to Perform Tasks

By increasing student involvement in both initial and ongoing needs assessment, the participants involve students in negotiating the curriculum. For example, Joanne encourages students to bring to her attention the authentic tasks with which they're having difficulty. She then incorporates learning to perform those tasks into the curriculum:

I always say, ..."If you have anything...that is a problem for you, bring it in." ...For example, one time a student brought in a daycare form, which was...seven pages long, and I thought, *Oh no, what am I going to do with this?* ...I asked the students if they wanted to do it and they said 'yes', so we plodded through it.... They needed it. ...They said, "If we learn to do it, then we don't need help from somebody else." (Joanne #74)

Before the CLB, Ardyth, like Marilyn, decided what her students would study. She assumed that time would take care of the language problems that her students were having. She finds that her students' input now carries great weight in her planning:

The students are constantly telling you what they're having problems with.... They're kind of telling you where you should go next. And you

might not change tomorrow's lesson, but you know the next unit.... (Ardyth #69-71)

Because of the constantly changing student population, Ardyth feels that she'll always be learning of and responding to new student needs:

> Yeah, it is very interesting. I think.... With the Benchmarks, you don't really stop learning. You don't say, *Well, I've got it now.* Because there's always more things that come up, because...different cultures come in, and they come from a different point of view. (Ardyth #54)

Melissa also spoke of her students' input alerting her to the tasks that they needed to learn to carry out:

> ...It's more functional. It's more real life. It's part of, "What do I have to do? What do I have to write?" When we're doing this particular theme, winter...we're going into some of the winter health problems and ...the Get Well card, and the doctor's office, and filling in the form when you are a new patient.... They bring stuff for you too.... If it's Parent/Teacher interviews, they bring...the information sheets that are sent home to the parents and...there's a little slip where you fill in your information about what time you're going back for your interview. (Melissa #84-85)

By adopting a task-based approach to teaching AESL for settlement, the participants incorporated the teaching of tasks that students needed to perform using English into the curriculum. They placed more emphasis on the practical English that their constantly-changing student population

needed to use in their everyday lives -- what they needed to understand, say, read, or write in, e.g., preparing for a parent/teacher interview or giving written permission for a field trip:

> Diane: So, I'm wondering if, with Benchmarks, there has been a change in your conception of what good adult ESL teaching is?
>
> Joanne: I guess, just going back to thinking...*What does the student need, to live their life in Canada?* (Joanne #99-100)
>
> And these students need real conversation...They're getting it because I've changed because of Benchmarks. (Marilyn #107-111)

Task-based Approach

Participants focus on teaching the speech acts that their students have identified that they need to learn to perform in order to accomplish a task. Now, an important focus of lesson planning involves incorporating those language acts

> I think...we used to just teach English. ...Now I think...W*hat do they need in their lives*? ...which is different. (Joanne #38)

Donna said that she now places more emphasis on practical English that her students need to use in their everyday lives-- what they need to understand, say, read, or write, e.g., preparing for a parent/teacher interview or giving written permission for a field trip.

:

> Well, for example...going to the Legislative Building...I would think... *What language is the student going to hear? What language does*

the student need to speak? Will there be any reading? And if there were any new vocabulary, we would do that. Or grammar: *What grammar do they need? What structure do they need?* And so one thing we would do is practice...phoning the Legislature: *What questions would you ask for information?* So, if you needed any vocabulary or grammar with that.... (Joanne #10)

...What they have to know and hear and see and read and say, it's...number one now. (Joanne #146)

Once Laura has identified the task or speech act that needs to be taught, she looks at its components, as she described in our conversation:

Laura: Rather than thinking *Okay, we're going to do a particular grammar exercise...* [or] an isolated vocabulary exercise, I now think, *Okay, what kind of language does the student need to function?* If they're going to...start looking for jobs, what are they going to need to speak... hear...read... write? I start there, and then go to language functions... *They're going to have to learn to make a request. They're going to go in and ask for an application form...*all the different functions.

Diane: You think in terms of speech acts or tasks?

Laura: Yes. More so than the pieces of the language...You look at the task or the function. You're going to have to make a request, for example, or ask for assistance or whatever, and then you look at all the different pieces. (Laura #3-5)

I now look at my classroom teaching in much more functional kinds of terms. I think of language functions more than language pieces. I think of language functions more than just the grammar, just vocabulary. (Laura #1)

In addition to being conscious of tasks and speech acts, she tries to foster this consciousness of function in her students:

And another thing that really, really changed in my teaching is that I try to get the students thinking about language in terms of tasks and functions. And one of the exercises we're doing ...is called "breaking it down". I'll give them examples of language: *Oh, that's a greeting. That's giving advice. Oh, that's asking for information.* And I find if students start to look at things from a functional point of view, they don't get so tangled up in all the little pieces... (Laura #146)

Ardythe contrasted her past and present approaches:

I think, beforehand, we would do things on our own: *We'll study the season, we'll study this holiday, we'll read stories, we'll get better and better in English, we'll learn the grammar.* Whereas now I think we go at it a different way. We think...*Okay, what kind of language would you need to do this task?* So we're very task based. *What kind of language would you be hearing in this circumstance?* From that the grammar would come... *What language do you need to read? Do you need to read forms? Do you need to read a health brochure that*

comes out? We're trying to get them listening to the kinds of tasks...the kinds of things that they would do in real life. (Ardyth #39)

Willow's students' listening-and-speaking activities have become more functional, more closely linked to learning to perform a task:

> ...The listening-and-speaking has become more functional, more related to the task, because...we're building those steps, in getting to that task... For example, this week we're working on signs. So we started...looking at...the signs, doing a walkabout in the school.... When...they've got a handle on the signs,...we're going to tie in the listening and the speaking...."Excuse me, what is this sign?" Or, "Excuse me, can I park here?" ... It's what they can actually use. (Willow #9)

Now, teaching authentic tasks and using authentic materials is a focus:

> I think that my classroom practices have changed since the implementation of the Benchmarks.... I'm definitely more task oriented, ...more focused on what the student's needs are.... A lot of them are...new to Canada...[and] just starting to see a doctor.... They usually ask them to fill out a form and...read an appointment card.... At the end of the two weeks, we were able to complete successfully, for the most part, those two tasks.... We do a task in a way...every day...and then build on that. But my ultimate task is where I'm heading... (Willow B #2)

When I asked Van about changes in her classroom practices, she mentioned teaching of authentic tasks using authentic materials:

> Diane: ...What would be some of the things that I would now see that I wouldn't have seen before?
>
> Van: Well, let me give an example.... I took the little list of income tax locations. So that's a real piece of information, a real...
>
> Diane: Authentic?
>
> Van: ...An authentic list with the locations and dates and times. I thought, *This is good. This is useful. This is relevant...*I thought; *I want them to read this chart, but they're going to have to do some vocabulary development.* ...I did one little worksheet..."by appointment only," "free of charge"... some of those chunks of language.... What do they call them? Collocations.... And so they had to take those words and match them up with the meanings...in preparation to read the chart. (Van #4-7)

Continuing with her example, Van contrasted her past and present practices:

> The difference might have been...I may have not even given them the actual...I might have said, "Okay, here's a list. If anybody needs to read this, it's up on the board." Well, sometimes I still do that, but I thought, *No, this is the kind of thing they see out there when they're away from the classroom. Let's help them read through this.* (Van #15)

Summing up the difference that the CLB has made in her new emphasis on teaching functional language, she added:

> It's brought the outside world in, the real world into the classroom... making those connections. Not just grammar, not following a book, not just a grammar exercise, but trying to use real things in the classroom. (Van #15)

Use of authentic materials.

Participants' choice of more authentic teaching and learning materials, e.g. phone bills, for reading comprehension, and especially using authentic materials that students provided, was related to their change to a task-based approach. Joanne now uses authentic materials, e.g., phone bills, for reading comprehension:

> ...Reading a form, reading a bill, reading an MTS bill,...that's very, very functional.... (Joanne #187)

Melissa also chooses authentic materials:

> I'm looking for materials when I'm out now. Like...grabbing a fitness schedule from the Pan Am Pool. (Melissa #19)
>
> In reading, I just use totally different materials. I wouldn't say that it's a strength that I have, but I would say it's in the process of evolving. I look for different materials. Now I have a different awareness of what it is that I want to have them reading. (Melissa #60)
>
> It seems so dumb that we didn't use them before...(Melissa #80)

One of Van's sources of authentic materials is her students. She feels that the task focus of her teaching since implementing the Benchmarks has made students feel more comfortable about bringing authentic materials, e.g., letters from their children's school, flyers, and maps, for her to use in class:

> ...Students bring letters from school, so that's another place to get material. "What does this say?" ...They're kind of surprised by the amount of information.... One lady has five letters from...school... two different kids and...they may be the same, they may be different. It's kind of overwhelming for them. So once in a while you can take...a copy of a school letter and...study it together. Sometimes a business letter or a bill they don't understand...And if they have something else they need information about, ...they feel comfortable to bring that. (Van #81-85)

Teaching in Context: Skills, Strategies, and Culture

When the participants spoke of changes they perceived in their teaching, a common thread emerged. Whether they spoke of addressing the four skills, communication and learning strategies, or the cultural aspect of communicative competence, they talked about teaching them *in context.* Willow spoke of her new consciousness of the importance of teaching numeracy in context.

> [It has become]...a part of everything we do.... We don't even realize...sometimes, that it's a part of...the task. You cannot do that

new patient information form if you can't do your telephone number...postal code...You can't read the appointment card unless you can read the date and time and the doctor's address...Numeracy is big. It's so many areas. (Willow B #6)

Addressing the skills, strategies, and culture as the need arises or in response to communication breakdowns is now the participants' practice. Donna said that when a student encounters a barrier to communication, she tends to do an improvised lesson on the spot, to "sort out" the problem, but may return to it in subsequent lessons in a more systematic way.

For convenience of analysis, I'd like to focus separately on participants' perceptions of changes in how they teach each of the four skills, communication and learning strategies, and the cultural aspects of communicative competence.

Teaching Speaking

Two participants specifically spoke about the changes that they perceived that they've made teaching speaking since implementing the CLB. I believe that it is possible that only two did so because participants addressed it implicitly in their descriptions of the task-based approach that they have adopted. Willow spoke of teaching students to express their ideas and feelings: "...It's just become so important" (Willow, #20). Ardyth described an important change that she noticed in her teaching of speaking -- she teaches the specific task that the student is having difficulty performing:

> ...Some student said to me, ..."You know, Teacher, I know what I want to say when I go to McDonald's, but I go in there and they just don't understand me and I left in frustration." And I guess now I would just say, *Well, let's teach it,* and have a lesson on it the next day, on going to McDonald's. (Ardyth #35)

In the past, she might not have addressed the problem that way. She might have attributed his difficulty to not having enough language, rather than not having had the opportunity to learn to perform the task:

> Whereas, I might think, before, *Oh, well, I guess he needs just a little more practice in English before he can be understood at McDonald's.* (Ardyth #35)

Teaching Pronunciation

The area of teaching speaking that the participants did talk about explicitly was the teaching of pronunciation. That they perceived three changes came through strongly: they are now teaching pronunciation in context, as pronunciation issues emerge, with a focus on intelligibility. For example, most of Joanne's pronunciation teaching is impromptu, in response to arising issues:

> Diane: Do you ever do...an impromptu pronunciation lesson?
>
> Joanne: Yes! I mean, most of them are, because if that's the problem right then, then that's when you do it. (Joanne #125-126)

Pronunciation is taught in the context of the class's current theme and pronunciation issues are dealt with as they emerge:

...For example, today...*clients*...was on the income tax form.... It came up as a pronunciation issue.... They've had...practice analyzing silent letters.... He [a student] said, "What's the silent letter? Is the 't' silent?" So I...wrote ... k-l-i and then separated e-n- and –s. And I said, "Yes, ...you may start to say the 't' but you actually can't hear the 't' in clients but you sure hear it in client. The lawyer has a client. Actually, all these students... are clients." ... It's...at the moment, it's built in...I didn't plan that. It's...timely. And then I said, "Here's the word 'patient.' The doctor has... patients. But you don't hear the 't' with the 's'."[2] ...I do a lot of integrating pronunciation like that. But...before ...we used just some books...a list of tongue twisters. (Van #72-76)

Laura also handles pronunciation problems as they emerge:

I do pronunciation as it comes up in the classroom.... As things come up in the classroom, we stop and we work on them. I give them strategies.... (Laura #18)

However, some participants are still struggling with whether this new approach of dealing with pronunciation issues in context, as they arise, is adequate. This struggle is probably an indication that participants are still working out their own grounded methods of teaching pronunciation. Laura feels, perhaps because of her own learning style, that addressing a pronunciation issue as it comes up may not be adequate for all students.

[2] The "t" is not, in fact, silent. Perhaps this participant, who was teaching a literacy class, overstated the case in trying to get her point across to her learners.

She would prefer to teach rules or patterns and then have the students apply them:

> I like, as a learner -- it's probably my own learning style, that's nagging at me a little bit here -- I like rules and hooks to hang things on. So I sometimes think that if I were a learner in a second language that I would want to have more...rules, more sorts of.... One thing we're doing with the book right now is where the stress and intonation is, the patterns -- so give me patterns, show me how that works, and I will adapt that to my speaking. That's what I don't think I do enough of. (Laura #22)

Although she sees addressing a pronunciation issue as it comes up as addressing it "in isolation," she says it *is* addressed well when addressed as it emerges:

> Diane: Why do you address it when it comes up?
>
> Laura: ...Because it's a problem. *Here's something.* Or somebody will ask me something. So as it comes up or someone brings it up, or I hear it.... We address it. And I think we address it well, but my concern is that it's addressed in isolation.
>
> Diane: Of?
>
> Laura: Pronunciation... It's not in isolation of the *content*.... It's in context. In that way I'm thinking that's good. (Laura #23-28)

Laura feels that some students might need some generalizations about pronunciation to tie together pronunciation issues that were addressed as they emerged:

> Maybe...a chart so that ...they can see *Oh yeah, every second syllable in this particular verb* or whatever... That's what I think I don't do enough of, that structured sort of thing. (Laura #28-30)

She feels that her teaching of pronunciation has changed, but "not enough," perhaps a sign that her practice is still evolving. She is also uneasy about whether she addresses pronunciation "comprehensively":

> ...Not enough changes. I think it's the only area where I feel I should be doing a bit more. (Laura # 18)
>
> But I don't know if I teach them... a lot of competencies in pronunciation. (Laura #18-20).

Marilyn also feels some unease about the changes that she has made in teaching pronunciation. She feels teaching pronunciation is "the weakest point" of her teaching *because* she addresses pronunciation problems in context as they happen:

> I tend more to do pronunciation as it happens in the classroom. If there's a problem, then I will address it. (Marilyn #11)
>
> When something comes up in the classroom, say, the old example of *13-30*, ...I address it. (Marilyn #15)
>
> It's important when it comes up, okay? Planning for it is not important. (Marilyn #17)

> ...If...they're making mistakes, or they're asking questions, or I can hear what's going on,... I say *Okay now, how am I going to work this in here?* But I don't set up or design my lessons to include listening, speaking, reading, [and] writing every day, mainly because there isn't enough time. For a while I tried it...staggering it.... That seemed to work... and then I fell back into my old pattern of going with the flow, with whatever was happening in the room, and taking it from there. (Marilyn #29-31)

Focus on intelligibility.

Rather than focusing on the pronunciation of individual sounds or words as they did in the past, participants indicated that they now focused on suprasegmentals in order to enhance the intelligibility of their students' speaking:

> ...I think I'm more aware of the message that stress and intonation give to communication. (Joanne #142)
>
> ...In the classroom, now, I would...teach pronunciation as we go through. I hear there's a difficulty saying this, so we'll practice this aspect... If I hear they're really having problems with the stressed words in the dialogues...I'll...make a...lesson about the stressed and the unstressed words, the rhythm of the language that you would need for this dialogue. (Ardyth #21)

Melissa has seen a shift in teaching pronunciation, from an emphasis on sound production of individual words to an emphasis on suprasegmentals:

> For example, we were doing the things you keep in your car trunk when you are travelling out of town.... "You need a shovel to shovel snow from under your tires and a flashlight to see in the dark." And then we went back and...focused on the infinitive.... We looked at the way we pronounce it slowly, and then when you speak naturally. "To see, to touch, to cover. You aren't saying 'to.' You're saying 'tuh.'"... explaining to them that these words are going to be run together. "They don't sound like two words, they sound like one word. When you're listening, you are getting the gist. You have to pull those stress words and think in English. Because even in your own language you didn't listen to every word."... But it is something I am doing more consistently because I see it as all part of the package. (Melissa #45-51)

The main change that Donna perceives in her teaching of pronunciation is an emphasis on intelligibility. For her, intelligibility has become the main criterion of success for assessment of students' pronunciation and speaking. She pays more attention to teaching stress, rhythm, and intonation at the word, sentence, and discourse level. While the production of individual sounds or words may not be perfect, i.e., the student may speak with an accent, the main criterion for assessment is how well the message is communicated. Pronunciation problems that impede communication are the ones that she addresses, usually on the spot, and possibly further in later lessons.

Similarly, Van pointed out that intelligibility is the main criterion in teaching and assessing pronunciation:

> You want your students to be as Canadian-sounding...as [possible]...so that they are understood out there.... The more comfortable they are and the clearer their language is, the more accepted they will be. (Van #46)

Teaching Listening

Participants made a shift from testing listening to teaching students to perform authentic listening tasks. They also paid more attention to suprasegmentals and intelligibility and "listening for the message" rather than hearing and understanding every word. Melissa mentioned this emphasis on suprasegmentals when we discussed changes in how she teaches listening and speaking:

> Diane: Do you see any difference now in the way you approach the teaching of listening and speaking...in implementing Benchmarks?
> Melissa: I'd say more incorporation of natural language and focus on pronunciation. It's all sort of rolled into a ball. How you speak reflects...how you listen: the stressed, the unstressed. (Melissa: #40-41)

Joanne teaches students to focus on listening for specific information, listening for "the message," as she described in our conversation:

> Joanne: A criminal record check. One of the students asked me about that, for the first time in my teaching career. And so we

phoned...and it was one of those "Push this number... Push that number." I prepared the lesson...the task was to go home and listen to it and...answer it [the multiple choice question sheet]. That was hard.

Diane: That's really an authentic task

Joanne: ...So it was listening for information...What I did...was a multiple choice. You know, *Does the office open at eight o'clock , eight-thirty, or...five o'clock....* So it was focused listening for specific things...which is, I think, an important thing, because when you or I listen, we don't listen to everything. We're listening for something or some things in particular. And I think that's where we've sometimes fallen down before with students. (Joanne #170-173)

Commenting on changes in her teaching of listening, Donna said that there is now more emphasis on teaching students to listen for information, rather than to understand every word.

Ardyth, too, spoke of a shift from testing listening to teaching listening strategies, having students listen to the kinds of things they would listen to in real life, authentic listening tasks:

...They're listening to different kinds of things. We're trying to get them listening to the kinds of tasks that they... would do in real life, again, and I think we're still growing in that area. I think sometimes, before, we tested, rather than taught, the listening, taught them how to listen. (Ardyth # 39)

She said that, in the past, she told students to listen for the main idea, but realizes that she hadn't taught them the *strategy* of finding the main idea by listening for the stressed words:

> We said, "You don't have to understand every word. You just have to understand the main idea." But what was the main idea? The main idea is conveyed by the stressed words: I don't think we ever really thought about that carefully enough. That's what we've got to teach them to listen for and then just put the pieces together like the beads on a necklace. (Ardyth # 39)

Ardythe addresses some sociocultural aspects of listening by teaching students the strategy of paying attention to body language and other clues for understanding:

> And...also teaching them the cultural part...the body language, giving them more clues and more strategies for...listening and understanding. (Ardyth #48)

Participants draw the listening tasks from the theme(s) their students are studying:

> Well, if you, for example, go into the supermarket...you ask for directions, you're going to have to be able to listen and understand the directions. So then you would practice listening to those kinds of things, following the instructions there. So, listening, again, is task-based: It's following instructions, listening for messages, listening to conversations. (Ardyth #47)

> Listening. Has it changed since Benchmarks? Um, more functional rather than just a tape on a bunch of sentences about whatever....Really, I try to...see everything tied much more to my functions and my content. And I like it. And I think the students [do], too. (Laura #37)
>
> [Listening practice] would come...from my content, for example, interview questions that you're going to have to respond to. But I would have done that before, too. Going and picking up job applications, speaking, and then listening to the secretary's response. So again... *What are they going to hear? What are they going to have to listen to?* I try to pick up that kind of stuff and work it into activities: dialogues, partnering, and stuff. (Laura #45)

Van said that an emphasis on authentic listening tasks is the significant change in how she teaches listening. On days when she has volunteers in her class, she plans group activities that focus on authentic listening and allow her to do some formative assessment:

> ...With my volunteer activities, I do a lot of authentic listening.... We do a variety of questions...related to topics that we're discussing in class. It could be questions with an idiom and they're...trying to relate it to their own experience. The other day we did...a "Which one is different?" And ...the volunteers were trying to get them to explain which one was different.... There was no right or wrong answer.... And...getting ready for an interview.... We had had one of our

volunteers doing a talk on that...trying to get them to hear those words again and...use them in a real group setting.... I'm listening. I'm going around and sitting in on the groups.... (Van #54-55)

Teaching Writing

Several participants described a change in how they conceived the teaching of writing since implementing the CLB. Their old approach to teaching writing had consisted of asking students to write answers to reading comprehension questions. Their new approach to teaching writing focused on teaching students to perform authentic writing tasks, tasks that they needed to perform in their lives.

Before the CLB, Marilyn taught writing by teaching students how to write answers to reading comprehension questions. She had never thought of teaching students to perform writing tasks or look at different writing styles. Now she sees the need to teach the variety of writing tasks students need to perform:

> For years I thought a writing activity was answering comprehension questions.... Instead...there's more in the Benchmarks, different styles and different things of writing.... I had never ever thought about that, before.... But with the Benchmarks...there's copying, there's filling things out, there're all these different things that are classified for you. (Marilyn #67)
>
> ...In particular, writing has been a big change for me, because that's not how I perceived the teaching of writing until the Benchmarks

came out. So it's been a guide for me, and something I go back to, and look at, and say, *Okay, am I doing this?* And it's...kept me on track... going back to the Benchmarks. (Marilyn #2-4)

Having her students do journal writing allows Joanne to assess how students are incorporating new items into their writing, e.g., the paragraphing mentioned below:

...We do a lot of charts...writing on forms.... The students do journal writing.... But to me that's...almost like a test rather than a functional thing, because they're writing what they have practiced, and they're using the skills they've practiced in class. Very often the journal writing is related to something we've gone to...so it is kind of a test of using the vocabulary and stuff. (Joanne #198)

...My focus on journal writing is just to get a paragraph, indented...and they can write something that looks like a paragraph, although it does not necessarily have an introductory sentence. It's level 1 and 2, but it looks like a paragraph. (Joanne #202)

...Writing forms, filling out forms, writing a thank you note.... They wanted to write a letter, so we did a letter together. (Joanne #206)

Teaching writing, for Laura, involves assisting students to perform writing tasks:

Definitely things like filling in application forms. For example, some students the other day wanted to get involved in volunteer work. Now you even have to fill in an application for volunteer work. A task that

we're going to do tomorrow is writing a thank-you note as a result of our visit to Government House today. What are some other tasks? One gentleman is selling a car. His writing task is...to write a bill of sale. So a lot of the writing tasks are real-life stuff that they need to function, either that they bring into the classroom or that our content brings up. (Laura #11)

Now writing's a good example. With the Benchmarks, I don't just think of writing stories. I think in the past we were sort of thinking, *Well, writing means they can write paragraphs.* But now you realize, with Benchmarks...*writing can be all the different formats -- formatted and unformatted, all the different kinds of writing, filling in application forms -- many, many things other than just writing paragraphs or writing stories*.... I think it made us aware.... It's task-based. (Laura #9)

Donna noticed that the writing that she asked her students to do in the past, mainly answering reading comprehension questions, was more limited than what she requires now. Now she asks students to use writing as a means of communicating, e.g., writing a note to the caretaker of one's building, or sending a card to a friend.

Van gave an example of the authentic writing tasks she now teaches her students to do:

...Thank-you notes...copying...an inquiry letter...a short one [letter].... (Van #32-33)

...The leisure guide. There's a nice form in there.... You pretend you're registering your son for a class.... That's an area that you can always practice in, at any level.... Easy forms, you can make your own. And then...about level 3, maybe level 4, you can start using those authentic ones.... (Van #26-30)

When I asked if she would have taught those tasks before implementing the CLB, she responded:

... Probably not at that level. I've done them in regular stream at higher levels.... I find that the Benchmarks...maybe...stretched us a little bit. People can do more with the language.... (Van #36)

Changes in Teaching Reading

As participants implemented the CLB, they changed how they taught reading. They shifted from focusing on the story as their main teaching material to focusing on teaching their students to read theme-related material for information. Several participants spoke of how they used to "do stories " and how that has changed:

In the past I would do...a story...from a book about some family, not theme-based...just a human-interest story. [Now] I do more thematic reading.... And I used that reading [non-theme-based, in the past] for [teaching] the grammar.... (Joanne, #178-180)

I don't do stories any more. I do more reading for information...reading about the Golden Boy, because we're going to the Legislative Building.... (Joanne #176)

...I'd start with a story and maybe do some talking from that story, and then I'd see that they were having trouble... and find something, a book that would meet that problem. (Ardyth #11)

Now Ardythe uses stories that are "more related to real life" for different purposes: to provide an emotional context, a context for a task, or follow-up information:

...There were more stories. We taught a lot of stories. I think stories are still important for the emotional part of putting things in certain contexts -- a story before a dialogue, or to give a little bit more information after something -- but it's related more to real life.... (Ardyth #25)

Melissa feels her approach to teaching reading is still evolving. In the past, she used stories as a vehicle for developing vocabulary and for teaching reading comprehension. Although she considers that the stories "weren't totally non-functional", what they now read is more functional:

Melissa: Well, before, I don't think they were reading things that were functional at all.

Diane: What were they reading?

Melissa: Reading stories. I guess they weren't totally non-functional...

Diane: ...Just for vocabulary?

Melissa: Yea...just answer the questions and the true/false and all that. It wasn't totally not communicative, or functional, but not to the extent that it is now. (Melissa, #65-69)

Melissa: In reading I just use totally different materials. I wouldn't say that it's a strength that I have, but I would say it's in the process of evolving. I look for different materials. Now I have a different awareness of what it is that I want to have them reading.

Diane: What kinds of things would you have them reading?

Melissa: Well, right now we're talking about coping with winter, and we did a little news article on boosting your mood by doing a little bit of exercise. I have a leisure guide from Pan Am, and how to go through it. How to use the colour shading, how to use bold-face and symbols that are used in a booklet like that. To look at how the book is organized, because that's cultural. (Melissa #60-62)

They have to read their children's report cards...maps and...a bus schedule. (Melissa #73)

Similarly, Donna and Van's students read for information. As much as possible, Donna uses authentic materials in class -- schedules, notices, and bills, for example -- to teach reading. Van commented:

I had them answer questions, but just in short form instead of a long sentence answer.... A few years ago, for that kind of thing, I might have said, "Answer in a long sentence," but it's really not necessary. The Benchmarks...says this [short form] is important in this kind of

activity. They just have to find the information. They don't need to answer in a complete sentence. (Van #7)

Teaching Culture

Implementing the *CLB* brought participants a greater understanding of what teaching culture involves. A heightened awareness of the importance of addressing sociocultural factors was apparent in participants' responses. For Ardyth, teaching culture used to consist of comparing cultures:

> We always compared. You know, "How much did you pay for a haircut?" ... I've done that for years: "What did you do in your country for a holiday?" (Ardyth #48)

Ardythe pointed out that understanding the language without understanding the culture is not adequate for students:

> ...Culture is so much more.... Somebody may say something but they don't understand it, not because they don't understand the words. (Ardyth #48)

She gave the following as an example of a student's "understanding the words" but not the culture. A student didn't understand the follow-up and networking aspects of an employment search in Canada:

> I was talking to a guy at Benchmark 4 or 5. He said to me, "Well, you know, I've done everything you can.... I took my resume all over." And he's sitting back and he's not getting a call. And he was saying, "Well, I feel that I'm being discriminated against." But he didn't know

that maybe he needed to go back.... He didn't know that maybe he should be telling all of his friends to tell somebody else, all those...cultural things. (Ardyth #50).

Prior to the Benchmarks, Laura was much less conscious of teaching the cultural component. Like Ardythe, she spoke of the necessity of students' understanding the culture in order to communicate successfully:

...Before Benchmarks, I probably did some of it without realizing it, but not much. I knew that they had to adjust to this new culture..., but I'm doing it much more consciously now.... "When you go to the doctor, you're going to have to ask questions, you're going to have to respond to his questions, and know the vocabulary for your symptoms and your strategies so that he'll understand. What about a female doctor, if you're a man?" I try to bring that aspect in, too. It's really important. You can know all the vocabulary in the world and go there and totally embarrass yourself if a faux pas occurs. (Laura # 63)

Conveying the message that you wish to convey is now part of teaching culture:

When you say "please" to be polite, but are not...polite when you're saying it. They think when you say please, it's polite. (Joanne #56)

..."It's how you say it; it's not what you say." We do those kinds of things. (Joanne #58)

Assisting students' to correctly understand the message being conveyed to them is also part of teaching culture:

> And part...is thinking about the context, of where I am. I am a second language learner. I have to think a little bit differently. I have to watch the body language. So, if I don't get every word, that's OK. I have other ways of getting the message. (Melissa #53)

Believing that an understanding of the new culture is related to the students' wellness has led Melissa to include mental health issues in teaching about wellness. She focuses on building a sense of being part of a community, a sense of belonging in her students. She emphasizes taking care of oneself and its effect on learning:

> And I would also say too, with the emphasis on culture, one of the things that I'm doing...is pointing out the mental health part...to a greater extent. We've been doing a lot of stuff with the focus being on the sense of community, a sense of belonging. "Your well-being, your positive thinking, your taking care of yourself, are going to have a huge effect on how you learn, how successful you are." (Melissa #55)

One way Melissa does this is through encouraging her students to use computers and newspaper articles to research community activities that they can attend. She tries to link what they're learning in the classroom to the wider world, e.g., visiting the Group of Seven exhibit or attending fall suppers:

...We talked about a fall supper...a prairie tradition...an article in the Free Press...what they ate and...a whole list of dates...around Manitoba.... We took a provincial map, found all the little towns...and...talked about which highway we would take...and which direction you were going..., "How would you give me directions to get from your house to this location?" ...It was neat. Some of them actually do these things. (Melissa #75)

There was Tom Thompson at the Art Gallery with the Group of Seven... We went to a web site and...were...able to enlarge the pictures.... That was really exciting. And then, "Read: When it is open? When can you have a guided tour? How much does it cost?" The students...went on the tour... That's been our theme all fall. "You are part of the community. You belong here." And they do go out on the weekends.... We talk about the possibilities of things you can do. They come back on Monday morning and we can talk about them. We've also talked about racism and how if we don't participate and become part of something, it's this group here and that group there. (Melissa #76-79)

Teaching Grammar

Participants used to teach a grammar-based syllabus, but now teach grammar items in the context of the themes their students are working on:

...We used to say...*Okay, what are the tenses that we're working on?* ...I think that's still important.... Sometimes I find...they still don't

have their tenses and their verbs, and so on. And sometimes you...need to spend some time on that. But... not...out of...a book. You might try to tie in the verbs that you've been working on. So if it's filling out a tax form, "I have filled out my tax form already," you see, tied in with the relevant material you've been working with. You say, "Okay, these are the verbs. These are the tenses... We're going to use some of these verbs from this story that we've been working on"... instead of following a grammar book or whatever. (Van #42)

...Now I think we go at it a different way. We think...*Okay, what kind of language would you need to do this task?* So we're very task based. *What kind of language would you be hearing in this circumstance?* From that, the grammar would come.... (Ardyth #1)

Participants talked about not "holding back" on teaching students to use complex grammatical structures, but teaching them as the need arises. When asked about when she teaches grammar, Joanne said grammar teaching is determined by student errors:

...Whenever the need arises. For example, when students do journal writing, if I see a recurring error, that's a time to do that grammar.... If they're writing and they need it, we do it. One example, not too long ago, was they were writing something and they needed the present perfect and they were writing past tense, so I thought, *Okay, this is the time for it.* (Joanne # 40)

Joanne said that she sometimes pulls a grammar item out of the context of the theme to have her students do some guided practice on it, but then returns to the theme or task that her students are studying, to have students practice it in context:

> I still do some grammar pages as a practice related to what they need for that theme...[although] the sentences might not all be related to the Legislative Building. If we...do it at a higher level, I would do passive voice after we come back from the Legislative Building. And so we do a practice first on passive voice and then a practice related to the Legislative Building. (Joanne #14)

Teaching Communication Strategies

Another new focus that participants attributed to the *CLB* was teaching students communication strategies, in context, when the need for them arises or when a good opportunity presents itself. Teaching communication strategies is often spontaneous because of immediate need:

> ...When the time comes, when there's a need...I see, *Aha, here's the opportunity!* ...I do it on the spot or go home and prepare a lesson for it.... Sometimes it's on-the–spot teaching, because the opportunity is there..., and sometimes it's when I'm sitting down preparing and it's, *This is a good time to teach...clarification.* (Joanne #112-114)

Cultural aspects of communication strategies, such as "softening" the message or paying attention to body language and other clues for understanding are now explicitly taught:

> And...teaching them the cultural part, you know, the body language, giving them more clues and more strategies for...listening and understanding. (Ardyth # 48)
>
> ...The things that we use to "soften" the message -- they know them in the first language. They've got the English, but they wonder why they're received in an abrupt way.... Maybe...they're perceived as being rude. They...don't know the language that softens things to make the communication more relaxed for people. (Ardyth #52)

Melissa feels that she taught communication strategies previously but is happier about *how* she teaches them now. She now expects to be constantly creative and refining and reworking as she teaches them:

> I think I've done that [taught communication strategies], but again, I think I'm happier about how I do it [now].... I wouldn't think that next year I'd do things the same way. I'd probably change and add on. Melissa #58)

She also encourages students to look at the strategies others are using successfully:

> If you want to get good ideas, watch...the strategies.... Learn from other people. (Melissa #56)

Encouraging students to think ahead to the strategies that they will need to perform certain tasks is part of the lesson:

> And I'll talk to them about, "When you go to the doctor, you're going to have to ask questions, you're going to have to respond to his

questions, and know the vocabulary for your symptoms and your strategies so that he'll understand." (Laura #63)

And my students are very good right now about asking questions for clarification.... They're comfortable. They're not afraid to...use the strategies.... (Van #56)

Teaching Learning Strategies

Focusing on learning strategies may be related to involving students more in their own learning, as participants mentioned above. Implementing the *CLB* has included the teaching of strategies:

...If you're a person who's been in the system for 25 years,... it's a process to...take some of your old ways and...say *How can I stretch? How can I include...maybe... strategies? How can I help students improve on a strategy for learning?* (Van #3)

...I think what we've done since the Benchmarks, we've taught them a lot more strategies,... thinking about how they're learning, what works for them, and discussing in a group how they learned to do this. (Ardyth #91)

Students are taught strategies for note taking and pronunciation:

And also strategies.... You can do note taking. And you can teach them... "You want to take your notes in English.... Maybe because of the time thing, everything's coming so fast, you want to take notes in your own language...do diagrams...do a coding kind of thing...There are many strategies you can use in note taking." (Laura #15)

> I do pronunciation as it comes up in the classroom. For example, as things come up in the classroom, we stop and we work on them. I give them strategies... (Laura #18)

Teaching strategies is also a factor considered when selecting teaching materials:

> I want the impossible because I want something that has the content for employment and all the functions for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. And then all the vocabulary, strategies, and cross-cultural [competence]...I want all of that. (Laura #125)

Assessment

In the assessment of students, participants made a shift from focusing on grammatical accuracy to focusing on fluency as the main criterion for success:

> ...I don't assess now at all like...in the past, and every year I add something different, or I learn something new from a colleague ...from sharing.... I'd say the assessment is more functional.... I'm using an idea that I got from another teacher, which is using the volunteers in the classroom and having the students make an appointment with a specific task that is an end result of what's been happening. And then I'll try and assess that way. And I'm going to try that method. And see how that works. That would be totally new for me. It's what I was trying to do before, but this continuous intake makes it a little bit difficult. (Melissa #118)

When assessing a student, Donna's criteria for success are now:

> Is the message getting across accurately? Does the learner communicate or receive the message accurately, whether listening, speaking, reading, or writing? (Donna #3)

Particularly in teaching and assessing pronunciation, intelligibility has become the main criterion. Van explained it:

> You want your students to be as Canadian-sounding...as [possible]...so that they are understood out there.... And the more comfortable they are and the clearer their language is, the more accepted they will be. (Van #46)

The *CLB* descriptors allow participants to articulate for their students the language tasks that they need to learn, to see their students' progress more clearly, and to have more meaningful discussions about student progress. The *CLB* also affected participants' relationships with their students:

> Once or twice I've had a student...confront me with..., "What are we doing and why?" and I was able to sit down with that document and say, *Here it is. This is what we're working on in this class. This what you need to do....* We never had that before.... When someone enters your class, their Benchmark is that number, you have a *really good* idea of where they are, what they're capable of, and how you can assist them. (Marilyn # 69-71)

Laura finds that she is now better able to articulate for her students and for herself the language tasks that they need to learn to perform:

> ...Now I think, with Benchmarks, it's a much more organized, comprehensive approach. You can show them all the things that they have to do in speaking.... Benchmarks has given us those guidelines to go by. It's just much more organized...not so many loose ends. I think, before, we were trying really hard. When I look back at some of the old materials, we had functions..., vocabulary..., grammar....We had a lot of the pieces. Benchmarks just filled in the gaps. We have a more complete approach. And I think the students must feel that. (Laura #107)
>
> ...The steps are a little more clear than they were. (Van #59)

Students are given contact assignments that require them to perform communicative tasks outside the classroom, and are encouraged to assess one another informally on authentic tasks. Laura's students are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning by assessing one another informally on the tasks that they perform:

> So I find that if you offer them,... *The guide is your listening task, listen to the Lieutenant-Governor, and your speaking task is, if he comes to chat with you, how well can I small-talk, chit-chat about things? How well can I ask him a question?* One of my students came up to me today and said, "Oh Laura, Man was calling him [the lieutenant-governor] Peter." We were talking about how it was kind of

stuffy there, kind of formal, and how you had to address him as "Your Honour." [The student said], "I was so upset because he was calling him Peter many times." (Laura #61)

Participant-Student Relationships

Perceived changes in participant – student relationships were not explored explicitly in the interviews. As I reread and listened to the transcripts, I began to hear a subtext that signaled that changes had taken place in those relationships. Marilyn mentioned how the *CLB* document now enabled her to articulate for students the connection between the *CLB* descriptors and levels and what they were working on in class:

> Once or twice I've had a student...confront me with..., "What are we doing and why?" and I was able to sit down with that document and say, *Here it is. This is what we're working on in this class. This is what you need to do....* We never had that before.... (Marilyn #69)

Laura also spoke of being able to articulate the connection:

> You can show them all the things that they have to do in speaking.... Benchmarks has given us those guidelines to go by. It's just much more organized...not so many loose ends. (Laura #107)

An equally significant change in implementing the *CLB* is, I believe, the greater voice that students have. By involving them in both initial and ongoing needs assessment to identify both their language needs and the topics that they wish to study, the participants have made their students co-creators of the syllabus.

Conceptions of Teaching

I found no evidence that participants' conceptions of teaching had changed. None of them spoke of their past or present conceptions of teaching or described any changes in their conceptions of teaching. Possible explanations for that will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter 4, I presented results suggesting participants perceived that their classroom practices and approaches to teaching had changed in implementing the *CLB*. However, the results do not support the idea that participants' conceptions of teaching changed during implementation. Here in Chapter 5, I will summarize my findings, and then discuss them. Questions that I believe must be explored will be discussed in the limitations section. A discussion of the implications of this study, some recommendations resulting from it, and some suggestions for further exploration will conclude the chapter.

Summary of Findings

Chapter 4 detailed five main themes that had emerged from the data: a broadened understanding of communicative competence; lesson planning; responding to the functional language needs of students; teaching in context; and assessment. In response to my primary research question, findings seem to indicate that participants perceived various changes in their approaches and practices, but not in their conceptions of teaching.

Broadened Understanding of Communicative Competence

All but one of the participants spoke of a broadened understanding of communicative competence and its effect on their AESL teaching. A common thread was a lessening of the prominence of linguistic competence, compared to its former role in their understanding of communicative competence, and the increasing prominence of the other

aspects of communicative competence -- actional, discourse, sociocultural, and strategic competencies.

Lesson Planning

Participants made a shift to longer-term planning in order to address all the aspects of communicative competence as they involved learners in needs assessment; focused on student-selected settlement themes; sketched out in detail the steps involved in teaching all the skills required to accomplish the language tasks that students indicated that they needed to learn to perform; incorporated student feedback; and fine-tuned their plans as they proceeded.

Responding to the Functional Language Needs of Students

Involving Students in Needs Assessment

Participants assisted students to become more involved in their own learning by involving them more deeply in needs assessment. In addition to asking students, during initial needs assessment, to select the settlement themes that they wanted to study, they involved students in ongoing needs assessment. They asked them about their goals, and solicited feedback about whether their teaching was meeting their students' language needs. Participants involved their students in negotiating the curriculum by encouraging them to bring to class the authentic tasks with which they were having difficulty.

Teaching Students to Perform Authentic Tasks and Use Authentic Materials

By incorporating the teaching of tasks that students needed to

perform using English into the curriculum, they adopted a task-based approach to teaching AESL for settlement. They placed more emphasis on the practical English that their constantly-changing student population needed to use in their everyday lives -- what they needed to understand, say, read, or write in, e.g., preparing for a parent/teacher interview or giving written permission for a field trip. Participants' choice of more authentic teaching and learning materials, e.g. phone bills, for reading comprehension, and especially using authentic materials that students provided, was related to their change to a task-based approach.

Teaching in Context: Skills, Strategies, and Culture

Participants noted changes in teaching the four skills – listening, speaking and pronunciation, reading, and writing – as well as communication and learning strategies, grammar, numeracy, and the cultural aspect of communicative competence. They taught them *in context.* They addressed them as the need arose, in response to students' errors and communication breakdowns, sometimes doing an improvised lesson on the spot, or returning to them in subsequent lessons in a more systematic way. In teaching pronunciation and listening in context using the task-based approach, they focused on suprasegmentals in order to enhance the intelligibility of their students' speaking and the comprehensibility of the listening tasks, having become more aware of the important role that stress and intonation play in getting "the message" across.

Assessment

Participants made a shift in assessment of students, from focusing on grammatical accuracy to focusing on fluency as the main criterion for success. Particularly in teaching and assessing pronunciation, intelligibility was the main criterion. Participants gave students contact assignments that required them to perform communicative tasks outside the classroom, and encouraged them to assess one another informally on authentic tasks. The *CLB* descriptors allowed them to articulate for their students the language tasks that they needed to learn to perform, to see their students' progress more clearly, and to have more meaningful discussions about student progress.

Discussion

I believe that the changes that the participants in this study perceived in their approaches and practices correspond to what Jacobs & Farrell (2001) described as a paradigm shift:

> When a paradigm shift takes place, we see things from a different perspective as we focus on different aspects of the phenomena in our lives. Twentieth century paradigm shifts across a wide variety of fields can be seen as part of a larger shift from positivism to post-positivism. (p. 1)

Changes in Participants' Approaches and Practices

The changes in participants' approaches and practices were a process that started in the CALM-designed series of professional

development workshops (Please see Appendix A) that the participants attended. In the workshops, they not only became acquainted with the theoretical model (Please see Appendix F: The Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell Model of Communicative Competence) on which the *CLB* was based, but had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the *CLB* and its implications for classroom practice and to begin using the *CLB* as a curriculum framework for teaching and learning.

As participants worked with the framework during implementation, from 1996 to 2003, they experienced changes in their approach and their practices. Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined approach:

> ...Approach refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching. (Richards & Rodgers 2001, p. 20)

The participants' broadened understanding of communicative competence was pivotal to the changes in their approach and practices. That the changes are interrelated and reciprocal is compatible with the literature that I reviewed on curriculum implementation. Markee (1997) concurred with Fullan and reiterated what Fullan had said:

> The idea that the relationship between beliefs and behaviour is reciprocal has obvious implications for the teacher and curriculum development. If we accept the idea that teachers should "behave their way into new skills and ideas, not just think their way into them" (Fullan 1993, p. 15), then this suggests that change agents can use

> syllabus design and materials development by teachers as a convenient entry point into the larger process of curriculum innovation. Materials are the most tangible products of innovation. However, innovation must also engage teachers in the more abstract tasks of developing their own methodological skills and changing their ideas about what constitutes good teaching. (Markee 1997, p. 54)

Trialability

The CALM workshops offered Manitoba teachers trialability, the opportunity to try out elements of the curriculum framework. Consistent with Pennington's (1995) finding that the trialability of the process writing innovation was essential to its implementation, a key feature of the ALT Branch implementation strategy was the trialability offered as a result of the CALM workshops. Participants in the workshops applied what they learned about objectives, needs assessment, methodology, and materials to their own teaching situations and reviewed and revised it. Material from the objectives workshop was developed into core language learning objectives that were incorporated into *A Curriculum Framework for Implementing The Canadian Language Benchmarks in Manitoba* (MCHC, 1997). (For the specific topics addressed in those professional development events, please see Appendix A). Pennington's (1995) teachers had the opportunity to work with the innovation, discuss it, modify it, and develop a sense of ownership.

Similarly, the ALT Branch/CALM *CLB* implementation strategy prudently involved Manitoba teachers.

Tsui (2003) stated an idea congruent with that of Markee (1997) and Pennington (1995):

> Teachers' knowledge shapes their classroom practices, but their classroom practices in turn shape their knowledge, as they reflect on their practices during and after the action, and come to a new understanding of teaching. (Tsui, 2003, p. 65)

McCormick, Steckler & McLeroy (1995) found that second-hand training is not enough for an innovation to be effectively implemented, that individuals have to be present at the training session, rather than have the information diffused through existing networks, and that multiple training sessions over time provide more information about the innovation and allow educators to get feedback about their previous practice and increase their efficacy. The CALM workshops offered firsthand training, multiple sessions over time, and the opportunity to get and give feedback on working within the new *CLB* framework. This is congruent with Markee's (1997) theory that teachers' perception of the attributes of an innovation – its trialability and adaptablity -- were important to teachers' implementing an innovation. It is also congruent with the findings of Hughes & Keith (1980), that teachers' perception of the trialability of an innovation—the possibility of being able to experiment with it on a limited basis – was found to correlate positively with the degree of its implementation.

Conceptions of Teaching

I believe that my findings do not present any evidence that supports the idea that participants' conceptions of teaching changed during implementation of the *CLB*. When I asked participants if their conceptions of teaching had changed, they responded by talking about changes in approach or methods and persisted in doing so when I returned to the question. I can provide several speculations as to why that is. It is possible that they haven't really had occasion to *articulate* a conception of teaching, so the notion wasn't readily available to them. Conceptions of teaching were not discussed in the implementation workshops. In addition to the possible inaccessibility of the notion of conception of teaching, another possibility is that the question wasn't significant to them because their conceptions of teaching have not changed.

When Pettis (1998) asked Manitoba AESL teachers to choose, from several descriptions based on Freeman & Richards (1993) and Zahorik (1986), the description that best characterized their conceptions of teaching, the majority of them chose the art/craft conception of teaching. The art/craft conception of teaching places the responsibility for decision-making about the most appropriate approach and method to use for a given situation on the teacher. I believe that it is reasonable to speculate that the participants in this study held an art/craft conception of teaching. Having been accustomed to autonomy in decision-making, they perceived no change in

their conceptions of teaching when they made decisions regarding *CLB* implementation.

Teacher Expertise

The participants' great AESL experience and apparent expertise, as well as their descriptions of their planning and work, fit with Tsui's (2003) description of expert teachers:

> Expert teachers are more efficient in planning and more selective in information processing. They are also able to recognize meaningful patterns quickly. They demonstrate more autonomy and flexibility in both planning and teaching. Because they have a large repertoire of routines n which to rely, they are able to improvise and respond to the needs of the students and the situation very quickly. The automaticity that is made possible by the availability of these routines allows them to direct their attention to more important information. Similar to experts in other domains, these characteristics of their cognitive processes are very much related to their sophisticated knowledge schemata and knowledge base. (p. 41)

Her description of Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1993) theory of expertise as the development and maintenance of a process describes the participants in this study:

> ...Experts keep extending the upper edge of their competence by setting for themselves very high standards and working very hard to reach these standards.... Experts continuously reinvest their mental

> resources, freed up by the acquisition of relevant knowledge through experience, in problematizing what is taken as routine, in reformulating problems and solving them. Their conceptualization of expertise as a process rather than a state provides a new perspective for understanding expertise that departs from the way it has been understood in expert-novice comparisons. (Tsui 2003, p. 21-2)

Postmethod Pedagogy

Lesson Planning

Further, based on the evidence above -- Pettis's (1998) finding that the majority of Manitoba AESL teachers hold an art/craft conception of teaching, and the participants' autonomy in decision-making -- it is reasonable to assume that, in addition to having an art/craft conception of teaching, the participants, as experienced expert AESL teachers, had already embraced a postmethod pedagogy "beyond the transmission model of teacher education" (Kumaravadivelu 2001, p. 537). When Kumaravadivelu (2001) stated that "teachers can become autonomous only to the extent they are willing and able to embark on a continual process of self-development", (p. 549) I could not help but think of the participants. The ALT Branch *CLB* implementation strategy and the CALM series of *CLB* workshops appeared to assume a postmethod approach. Participants had the opportunity to gain a theoretical background and then apply that theory to their own teaching situations, experiment with finding their own

approaches, and have theory and practice inform each other. That allowed them to create their own grounded personal theories of teaching practice, consistent with Kumaravadivelu's (2003) postmethod parameter of practicality. The greater resources that participants spent on lesson planning was an investment in the process of development and maintenance of their expertise as described in Tsui (2003) above, as well as a manifestation of their postmethod approach.

Because "a postmethod pedagogy will always remain a work in progress, " (Kumaravadivelu 2001, p. 556) participants not only made a shift to longer-term planning in order to address all the aspects of communicative competence, learner needs, and skills required, but they also incorporated student feedback; and fine-tuned their plans as they proceeded. In responding to context, they seemed to negotiate between the curriculum framework and the context.

Responding to the Functional Language Needs of Students

Because postmethod pedagogy is context-sensitive and location-specific, consistent with Kumaravadivelu's (2003) postmethod parameter of particularity, and because the participants had adopted a task-based approach, it was imperative that the participants involved their students in needs assessment in order to identify the authentic language tasks that each class of students needed to learn to perform and to use authentic materials as much as possible. Kumaravadivelu's (2003) parameter of possibility, which "taps the sociopolitical consciousness of participants and

functions as a catalyst for continual identity formation and social transformation," was also respected as the participants assisted students in acquiring the language tools that they needed to live their lives.

Teaching in Context: Skills, Strategies, and Culture

Having adopted a postmethod task-based approach, participants geared their teaching to assisting students in learning to accomplish tasks using English, tasks that were selected by each participant's class of students. With successful communication as the goal, participants taught the skills, strategies, and competencies involved in performing the tasks in context, on an as-needed basis.

Assessment

In line with their postmethod approach, participants assessed students according to how successfully the student performed the task, rather than focusing largely on the grammatical accuracy of the language, as had been common with a more grammar-based approach.

Conclusions

Change in Approach and Practice

Participants perceived that their approaches and practices changed during implementation of the *CLB*, but not their conceptions of teaching. They adopted a task-based approach and employed appropriate practices for that approach.

No Change in Conceptions of Teaching

It is possible that the participants, as experienced expert teachers, did not change their conception of teaching because it wasn't necessary for them to reformulate their conceptions of teaching in implementing the *CLB*. Consistent with an art/craft approach to teaching (Zahorik, 1986) and with postmethod pedagogy, they chose from their repertoire the approaches and practices that they considered appropriate for their teaching situation.

The Process of Expertise

It is possible that the changes that the participants perceived in their approaches and practices were, in addition to an effect of implementing the *CLB*, part of a process that seasoned expert teachers undergo as they implement an innovation, as described above by Tsui, (2003, p. 21-2, 41).

Postmethod Pedagogy

As experienced expert teachers, these participants were already embracing a postmethod pedagogy. Presented with a new curriculum framework for teaching and learning, they chose from their repertoire of teaching approaches and practices the approach and practices that they thought were most appropriate for their particular teaching situations. In order to teach students to perform the tasks using the English that they needed to learn, they adopted a task-based approach. Involving students in their own learning through involving them in needs assessment, discussing their goals, soliciting their feedback , i.e., involving them in negotiating the

curriculum, is one of the macrostrategies that Kumaravadivelu considers part of postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu 2003, p. 39).

Role of the ALT Branch *CLB* Implementation Strategy

The ALT Branch *CLB* implementation strategy was crucial to the participants' implementation of the *CLB*.

Trialability

The ALT Branch *CLB* implementation strategy gave the participants the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the *CLB* and to begin working with it. In the workshops, participants were able to work with other colleagues on implementation and devote unbroken time to it. It aligned with Fullan & Pomfret's (1977) recommendations:

> New approaches to educational change should include longer time perspectives, more small-scale intensive projects, more resources, time, and mechanisms for contact among would-be implementers at both the initiation or adoption stages, and especially during implementation. (p. 391)

A key attribute of the implementation strategy was trialability of the innovations. Teachers were able to gather theoretical background, develop their own approaches, experiment with them, and modify them over a period of time.

User perspective

Another key feature of the ALT Branch implementation strategy was that it employed what Fullan & Pomfret (1977) described as the user

perspective on implementation, "favored as the most effective for high degrees of implementation" (p. 379), wherein the users of the implementation have a role in the decisions concerning which innovations to implement and how they will be implemented.

Implications and Recommendations

Implementation Strategy Crucial

A carefully planned implementation strategy is essential for the successful implementation of the *CLB*. An examination of the ALT Branch *CLB* implementation strategy produces the following recommendations:

1. Develop broad-based implementation programs, multiple sessions over time, that provide support for locally-developed forms of implementation so that users see the program as clear and explicit.
2. Encourage local experimentation and development of variants of innovation during implementation and use the evaluation of innovative projects to give feedback to facilitate implementation rather than to judge success or failure. Among the fundamental functions that the teacher as implementation agent must perform is planning for the use of the curriculum within a given situation.
3. Provide time and support for in-service training that encourages personal interaction among implementers, and between implementers and planners/consultants.
4. Employ a user perspective, "favored as the most effective for high degrees of implementation," (Fullan & Pomfret 1977, p. 379) during

implementation. Users should have a role in the decisions concerning which innovations to implement and how they will be implemented. Keep relatively low or flexible the a priori explicitness of innovations. Allow users to specify the characterisitics of implementation and to develop ways of using them.

5. Encourage the development of products such as teaching materials during the implementation process.

6. Foster an organizational climate that favours ongoing support of implementation through staff development and supervision (McCormick *et al.*, 1995 and Pennington, 1995). The more organizational support teachers receive to assist with implementation, the greater the degree of implementation.

7. Encourage the adoption of a postmethod pedagogy. The autonomy that it offers is consistent with the user perspective on implementation, enabling users to see themselves as crucial decision-makers in implementation.

Teacher Training

It is imperative that AESL teachers receive training that is consistent with *CLB* implementation. The following recommendations follow from that need:

Pre-Service Training

1. Pre-service training for AESL teachers must include comprehensive training on the *CLB* and how to implement it. Pre-service training that merely involves a quick introduction to the theoretical background of the

CLB and an overview of the *CLB* documents is inadequate. This study suggests that even expert AESL teachers felt that they needed an extensive training period. McCormick, Steckler, and McLeroy (1995) makes a strong argument that multiple training sessions over time provide more information about the innovation, allowing educators to get feedback about their previous practice and increase their efficacy (p.217).

2. Encourage pre-service teachers to explore a postmethod approach. Implementing the *CLB* places great demands on the teacher to make decisions about how to respond to the student needs of a given class in the most appropriate manner possible for the situation.

3. Ensure that pre-service teachers acquire knowledge of the importance of pronunciation and of how to teach it. Participants noted the increasing importance of suprasegmentals.

4. Ensure that pre-service teachers acquire a knowledge of grammar and of how to teach it. Taking a task-based approach, the participants found that they still taught grammar, but in context.

In-Service Training

Teachers who are unfamiliar with the *CLB* and with postmethod pedagogy would find implementing the *CLB* challenging indeed. I recommend:

1. In-service training as the optimum location for *CLB* implementation. It not only allows interaction with the teaching situation, but the different contexts in which the trainees are operating enrich the experience.

2. For in-service training, a well-planned implementation strategy similar to the one employed by ALT Branch (Please see Appendix A: ALT Branch *CLB* Implementation Strategy).

3. For AESL teachers who do not have access to in-service training such as that above in #1, a post-secondary in-service teacher course devoted solely to the *CLB* and its implementation, with an emphasis on collaboration in developing approaches, practices, and materials for their specific situations.\

4. That the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks provide leadership by developing a national *CLB* implementation strategy to support the use of the *CLB* descriptors across the country.

5. That TESL Canada provide leadership by making knowledge of the *CLB* and its implications for teaching a requirement in teacher certification and by employing the *CLB* descriptors throughout its mandate.

6. That the ALT Branch offer their entire series of *CLB* implementation workshops on an ongoing rotating basis in order to require that all Manitoba AESL teachers receive *CLB* training.

CLB Training as a Qualification for Employment

In programs where the *CLB* has been mandated for use as a curriculum framework in Canada, it is incumbent on funders, employers, and professional organizations to take the steps necessary to ensure that *CLB* training becomes a requirement for employment.

Further Exploration

There are several broad areas that beg further exploration: *CLB* implementation by non-expert teachers, *CLB* implementation by teachers who employ other approaches to AESL teaching or who hold other conceptions of teaching, and *CLB* implementation in situations where a broad-based implementation strategy is not possible.

CLB Implementation by Non-Expert Teachers

This study has relevance for *CLB* implementation by programs that employ experienced, trained ESL teachers because the participants in this study were experienced expert AESL teachers. However, the wide variety of government-funded AESL programs in Canada mandated to use the *CLB* as a framework for teaching and learning employs AESL teachers of varied training, experience, and expertise. *CLB* implementation by novice and experienced non-expert AESL teachers is an area that invites inquiry.

Implementation by Experienced Teachers Who Take Other Approaches or Hold Other Conceptions of Teaching

The participants in this study employed a postmethod approach to AESL teaching and learning and held an art/craft conception of teaching, as discussed earlier. An area for future exploration would be *CLB* implementation by teachers who hold approaches to AESL teaching other than postmethod or who hold conceptions of teaching other than art/craft conceptions.

Implementation of the *CLB* in Isolation

For any number of reasons – fiscal, physical remoteness, lack of trained personnel, scarcity of support -- there exist in Canada AESL classes and programs that operate in isolation of other programs. In these programs, there may be teachers who are doing their best with little support to implement the *CLB.* They may be using the *CLB, CLB*-related documents such as the *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: A Guide to Implementation* (Holmes, Kingwell, Pettis, & Pidlaski, 2001) and *The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Additional Sample Task Ideas* (CCLB, 2001) and any resources that they can find online, such as the teacher resources section of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks website (www.language.ca). How teachers implement the *CLB* within such constraints is another area of inquiry that may yield helpful findings.

CLB Implementation at Higher Levels

This study focused on participants teaching AESL for settlement at *CLB* levels 1-8. AESL at *CLB* levels 9-12 focuses on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Preparation (EAP). Formal exploration of *CLB* implementation at these higher levels still remains to be done.

Limitations of the Study

As I thought about this section, my thoughts turned to what Birell-Bertrand (2004) had written:

> As a researcher, I am now tasked with posing the difficult questions that have emerged from my research, not only aware that I do not have the answers, but also with the belief that there are multiple answers to these questions. (Birell-Bertrand 2004, p.147)

Benchmarks and Professional Maturation

As I discussed my earlier findings (Koreen, 2003) with a professor, he asked me a question that I found difficult to answer at the time. He had asked me if the changes in approach and practice that the participants had perceived could be attributed to their professional maturation rather than to the implementation of the *CLB*. I raised that question with several participants during their interviews. What they said has convinced me that his question poses a false dichotomy. Both processes are in operation, as Tsui (2003) had described of expert teachers, in this group of participants. Donna felt that the changes in her classroom practices and her approach to ESL teaching were not solely attributable to the implementation of the *CLB*, but were also an effect of her professional maturation as an ESL teacher. Melissa didn't feel that the changes that she made could be attributed solely to her professional maturation as a teacher or solely to implementing the *CLB*. She felt that many of these changes had happened "across the program" and that the *CLB* was the "impetus for change."

Diane: How much of this is attributable to maturing as teachers and how much is [implementing] Benchmarks [the *CLB*]?

Melissa: Hmmm. That's an interesting question. Well, what's the difference between maturing ... Isn't part of maturing change? Part of being human is changing. How can you be a teacher and not [change]?

Diane: Would some of these changes have happened anyways?

Melissa: Well, I don't think so. Not across the program the way it is. To some extent, perhaps. But no, I honestly don't feel that. I think what happens is, you get kind of caught on something and you need someone to push you off what you're caught on. You need to have that little impetus for change. (Melissa #94-97)

The thoughts that Melissa expressed about the relationship between the changes that she made while implementing the *CLB* and professional maturation are consistent with what Tsui (2003) described:

> Teachers' knowledge shapes their classroom practices, but their classroom practices shape their knowledge, as they reflect on their practices during and after the action, and come to a new understanding of teaching. This kind of reframing of teacher knowledge is particularly evident when teachers come across problems and puzzling situations. There is a dialectical relation between teachers' knowledge and their world of practice. As teachers respond to their contexts of work and reflect on their practices, they come to a new understanding of teaching and

learning. The knowledge that they develop in this process constitutes part of the contexts in which they operate and part of their world of practice. (Tsui 2003, p. 65-6)

Melissa's experience appears to be an example of Tsui's (2003) characterization of Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1993) theory of expertise:

> ...A process, rather than a state, in which experts keep extending the upper edge of their competence by setting for themselves very high standards and working very hard to reach these standards. Bereiter and Scardamalia see the development and maintenance of expertise as a process in which experts continuously reinvest their mental resources, freed up by the acquisition of relevant knowledge through experience, in problematizing what is taken as routine, in reformulating problems and solving them. (p. 21-2)

Laura attributes some of the changes in her approach to her professional maturation as a teacher as she implemented the *CLB*:

> Laura: Of course, as a teacher, I have grown also, partly because of Benchmarks and partly because of just more exterior...
>
> Diane: Professional maturation?
>
> Laura: Yeah, that's right. (Laura #101-103.)

The *CLB* implementation workshops provided participation in professional development over time. The impact of that professional development is evident. However, innovations in the ESL field in general, such as the task-based approach to teaching, the recognition of the

importance of context, and the lexical approach, have all contributed to a shift away from grammar-based teaching.

My Relationship to the Participants

As I acknowledged in my *Interim statement of themes*, (Koreen, 2003) "I have come to understand that the influence of my presence at these interviews is considerable." (Koreen 2003, p. 18) All of the participants in this study were my colleagues. They knew that I had been involved with the development and field-testing of the Benchmarks, as well as being responsible for facilitating their implementation for six years. They had all attended professional development sessions to acquaint themselves with the Benchmarks. In addition, they had all worked on materials or curriculum development projects. Their quick response in volunteering for this study was a reflection of their enthusiasm for implementing the Benchmarks. It is important to view their responses in terms of that information. The teachers who did not volunteer to participate in this study might have given different answers if they had been interviewed. The participants that I interviewed might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear.

The participants' responses and the themes that emerged did not surprise me. My contact with and informal observation of teachers on a daily basis, both inside and outside their classrooms, leads me to believe that the changes that they describe are consistent with what I have observed. However, a question remains as to what they might not have told me, either

because of my known enthusiasm for the Benchmarks or because of the human tendency to make oneself "look good."

Expert Teachers

It is necessary to bear in mind that these are the perceptions of one group of eight participants who fit Tsui's (2003) description of experienced expert teachers. As qualitative research, this study does not aim for generalizability, but aims to understand this particular situation. To expect that another group of experienced experts or experienced nonexperts or novices would have the same perceptions or experiences would be an unfounded assumption.

Teaching Situation

The participants in this study were teaching AESL at *CLB* levels 1-8, in a program whose mandate was English for settlement. The conclusions and recommendations of this study should be limited to experienced teachers teaching at these levels.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter

April, 2002

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Tel. 775-1665

Implementation of the Canadian Language Benchmarks:
Teachers' Perceptions of Changes in Their Classroom Practices and Conceptions of Teaching

Dear Colleague:

I'm asking you to volunteer for my study on teachers' perceptions during implementation of the *Canadian Language Benchmarks*. The study will fulfill the thesis requirements for my Master of Education degree. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please fell free to ask.

The study will attempt to answer the question: Do Manitoba AESL teachers perceive that their conceptions of AESL teaching and/or their classroom practices have changed during implementation of the *CLB*? If so, how have they changed? If you volunteer for the study, I will interview you twice for approximately an hour each time, asking you to tell me about how you made sense of the *CLB*, what may have changed in your conception of what good ESL teaching is, and/or about changes in your classroom practices since the introduction of the *CLB*.

In order to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of all data collected, only my thesis advisor Dr. Pat Mathews, and I would have access to the written transcript and the information collected. Each transcribed interview will be identified only by the participant's pseudonym. Audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews will be stored in a secure place for a year following completion of my thesis and then they will be destroyed.

Participants will have the opportunity to receive feedback on the study at workshops or conference presentations. In addition, my master's thesis will be available for you to read, if you would like to do so.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to with draw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. For more information, please contact me, Diane Koreen, at 775-0416 or 775-1665, dkoreen@wsd1.org or rkoreen@merlin.mb.ca, or my supervisor, Dr. Pat Mathews, at 474-9042.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122.

Participant's Signature Date

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature Date

Appendix B: Interview Questions and Probes

As suggested by Stake (1995), and by Babbie (2001), I began the interview by asking each participant to respond to my open-ended primary interview questions. The specific questions are listed below:

Has anything changed in the way you think about teaching, particularly your conception of what good ESL teaching is?

Has implementing the Benchmarks changed how you teach or how you think about teaching ESL?

What's changed, in your classroom practices, if anything, since we've been implementing Benchmarks?

Do you think your conception of ESL teaching has changed since the Benchmarks?

During the interviews, I used probes to clarify or expand the information the participant provided. Babbie (2001) describes a probe as "a request for an elaboration" on a participant's response to a (usually) open-ended question (p. 260-261).

> Sometimes the best probe is silence; if the interviewer sits with pencil poised, the respondent will probably fill the pause with additional comments...Appropriate verbal probes might be "How is that?" or "In what ways?" perhaps the most generally useful probe is "Anything else?" ...Probes must be completely neutral; they must not in any way affect the nature of the subsequent response (Babbie, 2001, p. 261)

Below are some probes that I found in Fawcett-Frain (1989) and that I used in the interviews:

Could you give me an example?

W*hat do you mean?*

Can you tell me more about that?

Really?

How? *(Fawcett - Frain 1989, Appendix B)*

The following questions were helpful in assisting participants in making connections between their out-of-classroom practices and in-classroom practices:

What would that look like in your classroom?

What would I see in your classroom?

How does that play out in your classroom?

Appendix C:

Manitoba CLB Implementation Strategy

	1997				1998					1999					2000				
	Jan	Mar	May	Sept	Nov	Jan	Mar	May	Sept	Nov	Jan	Mar	May	Sept	Nov	Jan	Mar	May	Sept	Nov
	Feb	Apr	Jun	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Jun	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Jun	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Jun	Oct	Dec
Curriculum Components																				
Foundation – PD/develop	⇨																			
- feedback/revise/implement		⇨																		
Mechanism for Ongoing Student Invol'mt		⇨																		
Objectives – PD develop	✓	✓	✓	✓																
- edit/critique/feedback				✓	✓	✓	✓													
- revise					✓	✓	✓	✓												
- fieldtest (use for lesson plan)						⇨	⇨	⇨	⇨											
Needs As'ment – PD/develop									✓	✓										
- feedback/revise/fieldtest											✓									
- review/revise												✓	✓							
-implement														⇨						
Methodology – PD/develop				✓	✓	✓	✓													
- feedback/revise/fieldtest						✓	✓	✓												
- review/revise									✓	✓										
- implement											⇨									
Materials – PD/develop					✓	✓	✓	✓	⇨											
- feedback/revise/fieldtestl							✓	✓	✓	⇨										
- review/revise										✓	✓	⇨								
- implement												⇨								
Evaluation – PD/develop								✓	✓	✓										
- feedback/revise/fieldtest											✓	✓								
- review/revise													✓	✓						
- implement															⇨					
Fieldtest - all														✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Revision (final product)																			✓	✓