STUDENTS’ AND TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT
AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Minor thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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DECLARATION

This thesis does not contain any other material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed

[Signature]

Teresa Devine
# ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELICOS</td>
<td>English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAP</td>
<td>Intensive Academic Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Royal Society of the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESL</td>
<td>Teaching English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Chris Davison, for her support and advice throughout this project.

Thanks are also due to Kevin Menzies and Margaret Devine, for parenting and grandparenting above and beyond the call.

I would also like to thank the students and my colleagues at Rosedale who generously shared their time and thoughts.
ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on the results of an investigation into the beliefs students and teachers in an ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) centre hold about the value of learner autonomy, particularly in regard to fostering self-correction and critical thinking skills. It also reports on the process of change that initiation into a Western academic culture may affect in students, and students’ and teachers’ beliefs about that change.

This thesis is significant because beliefs are regarded as powerful subjective factors which influence one’s judgement and perception. Given that greater numbers of international students are attending Australian universities each year and student autonomy is considered crucial for their success at tertiary level in Australia, such students’ beliefs about autonomy need to be understood. However, students’ beliefs are also affected by their context and hence the interaction of students and teachers is central. To better understand the learning process, the beliefs of both groups and the influence of the context in which they operate was investigated.

The investigation was longitudinal and quasi-ethnographic in style and involved students and their teachers in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) class in the context of an ELICOS centre. It involved analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from students and teachers in a number of classes, in addition to data from three focus students and their two teachers.

This thesis concludes that the students’ beliefs and values regarding error correction and critical thinking did change and the influence of the teachers and the culture in which they operate was implicated. Evident in the students’ comments was a compulsion to adapt to the context in which they were now studying and take on the values of this learning environment. The beliefs of the teachers seemed to be expressed via two different discourses; the personal beliefs held by the teachers, and the discourse of the institution in which they worked.
1. CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

In my role as assistant coordinator at a large ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) centre, one of my duties was to deal with students wishing to change classes. The students who came to me were often worried that the class was not meeting their needs. Many of the students' concerns appeared to stem from a difference between their initial expectations of the class, and what they actually encountered. It seemed that often the differences between the educational style of their own countries and that of Australia led to a tension which was difficult for some students to overcome. In some instances this tension appeared to result in anxious and demotivated students. This thesis is the result of my attempt to understand this problem.

The differences between any two systems of education are manifested in many different forms. Central to any system are the beliefs, values and philosophies of education, learning and self that underpin what is formalised and institutionalised in any particular context, and what is practised by educators in that context. Furthermore, beliefs are regarded as powerful subjective factors which influence one's judgement and perception. Thus, to attempt to understand the tension and conflict the students were presenting to me, I felt it necessary to investigate the beliefs and philosophies held by the key protagonists in this scene: the teachers and the students. This thesis investigates the beliefs learners and teachers in the language centre hold about a central philosophy in Western academic culture: learner autonomy. It also attempts to investigate the process of change in beliefs that initiation into a Western academic culture may affect in students and the implications of that change.

In my own context at Rosedale English Language Centre, the majority of the students wished to enter Australian universities. Hence, almost half of the classes at the centre are concerned with preparing the students for academic life. These classes include
IELTS (International English Language Testing System) preparation and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Given this emphasis on the academic preparation of the students, the beliefs and philosophies of the students and teachers regarding this preparation were considered critical.

Rosadale conducts a variety of EAP courses. Two are labelled EAP; one for students deemed to be eligible to study at an upper intermediate level and the other at a more advanced level. Generally, once students have either successfully completed an EAP class, or attained the IELTS score required for entry into their university course, they are considered eligible to study in an Intensive Academic Program (IAP).

The perception of many of the students at Rosedale is that to study in the IAP class is the pinnacle of success in the centre. The course requirements are challenging and students strive to enter and succeed in this class. Because in many ways it is representative of the aspirations of the students at Rosedale, the IAP class was selected as the focus class for this study.

In the rest of this chapter I will outline first the context and rationale for this study, then its focus and structure.

1.2 English for Academic Purposes

An increasing number of international students arrive in Australia each year, wanting to study at a Western university. However, while such students may be powerful consumers in the ELICOS and university markets, they are powerless to change the milieu to which they aspire. Rather than the academic culture accommodating them, the students are expected to change to fit into their adopted culture. Hence, a large proportion of these students enrol in an intensive English language course to gain the necessary IELTS score and study skills for entry into and success at university. During this period the students expect, and are expected, to make the transition from
successfully operating in one culture to another; from one language to another, from one educational context to another. This is no small feat, yet it is constantly occurring in ELICOS centres and universities throughout English-speaking countries.

This transition is often via an intensive EAP course aimed at preparing students for successful participation in the academic culture they intend entering. However, Benesch (1993) argues that the pragmatic orientation of many English language teachers, who perceive their role as assisting and empowering their students to succeed in Western universities, may actually be working to the students' detriment. By fostering a view that students must change in order to achieve their goals and orienting them to the demands and expectations that they will encounter in a Western academic culture, EAP teachers may be perpetuating a system in which the students are disempowered. A way to reconcile these paradoxes is needed.

Beliefs, values and systems of thought underpin a good deal of the culture of a society (Kramsch 1991). To understand the transition the students at Rosedale experience when they move from one academic culture to another, the beliefs held by individuals within those cultures, as well as philosophies dominant in the students' adopted culture need to be explored. This research is set in an EAP context, so that the beliefs of the students and teachers and the expectations that the students adapt to their adopted academic culture can be investigated. These issues and the need for research in this area are discussed in the next section.

1.3 The need for research

There is widespread acceptance of the value of structuring a language program around learners' objective needs and the target product, but these constitute only part of the picture of a learner. Attention must also be paid to the subjective needs of learners in the process of language learning (Nunan 1988, Tudor 1996). These subjective needs include affective and cognitive factors such as students' personality, confidence, attitudes and beliefs and cognitive style and learning strategies. The area of objective
needs is much more researched and better understood than that of subjective needs. This may be due to the ambiguous nature of subjective needs and their impact on the language learning process.

However, this paucity of research into learners’ affective needs could be to the detriment of the learning process. Beliefs have been found to be powerful subjective factors which influence one’s judgement and perception (Abelson 1979, Nespors 1987). In order to more fully understand the language learning process, a better conception of the beliefs that learners bring to the classroom and which influence their perceptions of learning is required. A number of studies (Schumann 1980; cited in Kern 1995, Bailey 1983, Bassano 1986, Rees-Miller 1993), have demonstrated that inattention to the beliefs, expectations and values of learners may lead to demoralised, threatened, or in some cases, hostile students.

Learners bring a diverse human experience to the classroom and so their expectations, learning preferences and their reactions to learning situations will all be unique. Tudor points out that exploring the role of subjective needs in language learning has to do with ‘the recognition and respect of human difference and the attempt to work with this diversity in a flexible and constructive manner’ (Tudor 1996: 98). This study aims to explore and describe this diversity.

The language learning classroom, however, does not consist only of learners; it is an environment that is co-constructed by the teacher and the students (Nunan 1988). The educational process involves a complex relationship between students and their teachers and to explore this interaction, the participants, their characteristics, purposes and expectations must be examined.

Current literature (Williams 1995, Freeman 1996, Burns 1996) argues for the usefulness of critical reflection by English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and the need to understand more about language teachers’ conceptions of what they do. As will be argued in the literature review, an examination of teachers’ beliefs requires
recognition of the institutional philosophies and discourses which influence their beliefs, and of the relationship between the teacher and her community. Given these considerations, qualitative research grounded in context is required to unravel teachers’ conceptions and practice of language teaching. Through research of this type language teaching and the impact teachers’ beliefs have on their practice will be better understood. Ellis (1996) and Williams (1995) also argue that teachers need to explore the cultural assumptions of the philosophies that guide their work and the impact that these philosophies have on students from other cultural backgrounds who come to study here.

One philosophy which is embedded in our practice as language teachers, and in academic culture generally, is the notion of autonomy. As will be seen in Chapter 2, autonomy is fostered through practices such as encouraging students to develop critical thinking skills and become independent of their teachers through self-monitoring. These practices are currently widely emphasised in Australian language classrooms, but it would seem that to a large degree, the process of gaining these skills is uncritically assumed to be beneficial to all students.

Ballard and Clanchy (1991) argue that student autonomy is crucial for success at tertiary level in Australia, exemplified in their assertion that many Asian students need to change from a reproductive, teacher-dependent approach to more analytical and independent approaches. This same emphasis is reflected in the first objective listed in the curricula documents at Rosedale for EAP and IAP classes which refers to the empowerment of students through greater autonomy and development of critical and analytical thinking. However, the processes by which the students might attain these skills is not acknowledged nor critically evaluated. Nor is the implication that Asian students lack these skills challenged. Yet, Spack (1997) argues that teachers and researchers need to view students as individuals, not as members of a particular cultural group. One must view students’ orientation to learning as a dynamic interaction of cultural, individual and contextual factors. Hence, to investigate the individuality of learners and teachers and the beliefs they hold, this research was qualitative in nature, allowing for the informants’ individual beliefs to emerge.
If the beliefs and values held by the students do differ from their teachers and from the academic culture to which they seek to gain entry, a need exists to explore the impact of this tension. This study aimed to investigate the process of enculturation of students into a Western academic culture and evaluate any change in beliefs that might occur as part of this process. To understand this process and the pressures that students might experience, it was also crucial to explore the interrelatedness of their beliefs, those of their teachers and the culture in which they interact. This required research which was longitudinal in nature, involving students and teachers operating in the same context. However, there is a paucity of research which addresses these requirements. Research to date has either focussed only on students or teachers, but not both (Willing 1985, Horwitz 1987, Nunan 1988), or has been cross-sectional in nature (Yang 1992, Kern 1995). Also, none of the studies cited have involved international students studying in intensive language programs. This research, which involves students and their teachers, is longitudinal in its approach and grounded in the context of an ELICOS centre, is an attempt to address these gaps in the research to date.

Given that greater numbers of international students are attending Australian universities each year, the implications of the process of enculturation they may experience whilst studying here are increasingly far-reaching. Research into the beliefs and philosophies held by students and teachers which is qualitative in nature and grounded in context will assist in critical evaluation of the practice of teachers and enable a deeper understanding of how beliefs give shape to the learning context.

1.4 The focus and structure of the thesis

Because of the lack of in-depth research into the beliefs of students and teachers in ELICOS with regard to autonomy in language learning, this thesis seeks answers to the following questions:
1. Are the beliefs about autonomy in language learning held by students in an IAP class different from those of their teachers, and if so, in what way?

2. Do the students' beliefs about autonomy change over the duration of a 10-week course, and if so, what contextual factors are implicated in the change?

The thesis is structured as follows: The second chapter reviews the literature relevant to the thesis questions. The research questions are related to two distinct fields of enquiry and the structure of the literature reflects this. The first, larger section deals with the nature of beliefs in general and then specifically in the field of language learning, discussing the beliefs of learners and teachers. The second section deals with the philosophy of autonomy as related to language learning and two practices which reflect this notion: error correction and the teaching of critical thinking. The third chapter describes the focus and structure of the research design and the rationale for this methodology. The fourth chapter presents the key findings of the research, covering the beliefs of the students and teachers regarding autonomy, error correction and the learning/teaching of critical thinking in IAP. The impact of the context on the teachers' and students' beliefs is also discussed. Finally, chapter five concludes the thesis, placing the research in a wider context and making recommendations for further research and improving practice.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the beliefs held by students and their teachers in an ELICOS setting, with particular regard to two features of language learning in an IAP/EAP program. The first of these is error correction and beliefs about the role teachers should play in the correction of student errors. The second is critical thinking and the value placed on critical reflection. Both of these features are implicated in the paradox inherent in fostering autonomy in an ESL educational context and are vehicles used in this study to explore in depth teachers’ and students’ beliefs about language learning and autonomy, and the process of change that may occur in students over a ten-week course.

The dual aim of investigating both students’ and teachers’ beliefs meant that I needed to examine the literature on the nature of beliefs in general, drawing from theories formed in the fields of psychology and sociolinguistics in order to define and describe beliefs and evaluate change. Because the students were operating in a second language and culture, I needed to be able to investigate the process of belief formation and analyse the relationship between the students’ beliefs and their current educational context.

With the second aim of investigating and comparing the beliefs of the teachers with those of their students, I needed to identify and analyse the literature regarding current research in the examination and interpretation of teachers’ beliefs in an ESL context. Section 2.2 briefly describes how, within a psycholinguistic framework, beliefs have come to be defined and an understanding of the process of belief formation. The influence these theories have in research into students’ and teachers’ beliefs in a second language learning context is covered, as well as the argument for an approach which recognises the sociocultural aspects of beliefs. Section 2.3 explores the philosophy of autonomy in second language education, and two features of language learning in this ELICOS context that are related to this philosophy. Section 2.4 concludes the literature review.
2.2 Beliefs in second language learning

2.2.1 The nature of beliefs

Beliefs have been a subject of inquiry in a range of fields, including education, business, medicine, law, anthropology and psychology. Furthermore, a scan of the literature in this area reveals that the concept of belief travels under many aliases; for example attitude, perception, value, philosophy and ideology. Because of this diversity, defining ‘beliefs’ is a daunting task. Rather than attempt to select one definition, this review will describe key theoretical perspectives which underpin much of the research into the nature of beliefs.

Two broad theoretical positions are the basis of much of the research into the nature of beliefs. The first of these is the psychological perspective in which the distinction between beliefs and knowledge is a primary focus. The second perspective, which is closely related to second language acquisition research, is sociolinguistic in its basis. Theorists in this branch view beliefs as socially constructed and socially constructing through the medium of language.

Many theorists working within a psychological perspective (Rokeach 1968, Abelson 1979, Nisbett and Ross 1980, Nespor 1987) concur on three significant points. Firstly, they argue that some beliefs are more resistant to change than others; secondly, that early experiences strongly influence the formation of beliefs and finally that beliefs have a strong affective power which influence one’s judgement and perception.

Rokeach (1968) developed and defined the notion of a belief system as consisting of all of a person’s beliefs. His analysis included the assumptions that beliefs differ in intensity and power and vary according to how centrally they are located, or how connected they are with other beliefs. Beliefs regarding one’s identity or self are more central, or connected, as are the beliefs one shares with others. The more central a belief, the more it will resist change.
Distinguishing beliefs from knowledge, Abelson (1979) suggested that belief systems have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge systems; that knowledge of a particular area can be distinguished from one’s feelings about the same. He also argued that knowledge is semantically stored, while belief system information is stored in episodic memory. As such, semantically-stored knowledge is logically organised in terms of semantic lists, whereas beliefs are organised in episodic memory in terms of personal experience or cultural or institutional sources. Furthermore, knowledge is related to facts, and as such, can be measured, whereas beliefs can be held with differing degrees of certainty, and so cannot be measured directly. The implication following from this is that research into beliefs must rely on inference and interpretation, rather than direct measurement.

Furthering the knowledge.belief distinction Nespor (1987) claimed that belief systems, unlike knowledge, can be held without general consensus regarding their validity. Furthermore, he contended that because of their affective nature, beliefs can be held by an individual which are inconsistent and in dispute with each other. Because of these differences between knowledge and beliefs, Nespor argued that knowledge systems are open to evaluation and critical examination, and therefore change, whereas beliefs remain basically stable and resistant to change. When there is change, it is not reason or argument that change them, but a ‘conversion or gestalt shift’ (Nespor 1987: 321).

Nespor (1987) argued that Abelson’s (1979) semantic/episodic distinction is controversial, but that a narrower claim that the subjective power of beliefs is often derived from particular episodes or events is tenable. Nisbett and Ross (1980) suggested that it is the early episodes and experiences which most strongly influence consequent judgements and formation of beliefs, making those beliefs formed early most resistant to change. The significance of one’s early cultural experiences in the formation of beliefs is profound and is particularly pertinent in the context of this research. A discussion of the cultural impact on the process of belief formation is critical to the second major theoretical approach to beliefs; the sociolinguistic perspective. This is discussed below.
2.2.2 Beliefs and the process of enculturation

Theorists generally agree that beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social construction (Abelson 1979, Van Fleet 1979, Nisbett & Ross 1980, Kramsch 1991). According to Van Fleet (1979), this cultural transmission has three components: enculturation, education and schooling. Enculturation is a lifelong learning process involving the assimilation of the cultural elements individuals experience in their personal world. This assimilation occurs through observation, participation and imitation. Education refers to the directed learning (formal or informal) which is normative in its aim, aligning behaviour with cultural norms. Schooling is the specific teaching and learning which takes place outside the home.

It has been argued that beliefs are formed from early experiences, and the influence of the cultural context in which a person spends these formative years is clear. According to Pajares (1992), beliefs provide personal meaning and help define relevancy. They help individuals to identify with one another and form social systems. On a cultural level they provide structure, order and shared values. These commonly held belief systems can be seen to reduce dissonance and confusion.

In relation to the teaching of language, and its link to culture, Kramsch does not distinguish components of enculturation, but states:

Systems of education breed systems of thought and that those systems of thought constitute a great deal of what we call the 'culture' of a society. At the very least, it represents the value attached by a given society to the phenomenon of language and culture itself. (Kramsch 1991: 221)

The values attached by different cultures to systems of thought and learning, and the role of one's cultural experiences in the formation of beliefs are at the core of this study. The aim of the study was to compare the beliefs of students from a particular cultural background who are operating, not only in a foreign culture, but in a foreign academic culture, with teachers from that dominant culture.
For this study culture can be read at two levels. The first level is the broader concept of culture as ‘bodies of knowledge, structures of understanding, conceptions of the world and collective representations’ shared by a social group or a whole society (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986: 166). The second dimension refers to academic culture, which, as Kramsch argues, is greatly influenced by the ‘culture’ of the society in which it operates. This academic culture comprises its own body of knowledge, understanding and conceptions that are expressed through particular discourses. Here discourse means, as Kress (1989) defines the term, sets of expressions that express the meanings, beliefs and values of an institution. This notion of discourse in relation to researching the beliefs of teachers is discussed in section 2.2.4.

For language students in EAP classes enculturation into an academic culture can be seen as a process of adopting the discourse of that culture. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989: 34) suggest that:

Given the chance to observe and practice ... the behaviour of members of a culture, people pick up the relevant jargon, imitate behaviour, and gradually start to act in accordance with its norms.

This process of enculturation may involve not only the assimilation of practices of the community, but also the values and beliefs of that culture as expressed in its discourses. Researching learners’ beliefs within this sociocultural perspective involves analysing language data to identify discourses expressed in the students’ language, explore the normative effect of the dominant discourses and interpret the students’ relationship with the discourse. A detailed discussion of two different approaches to researching students’ beliefs follows.

2.2.3 Research into the beliefs of second language learners

Interest in student beliefs about second language learning is relatively recent and dates back to the 1980s when research on learner strategies was at its inception. With its link to learner strategies, much of the research investigated how learner variables could explain differences in second language acquisition and was aimed at establishing which strategies would be ‘best’ for language learners to employ. These
studies relied, to a large degree on broad-based, quantitative research. More recently, however, there has been a move away from a psychological to a more sociocultural perspective, aimed at understanding beliefs not only as a reflection of inner states, but also as constructed within a social and cultural context.

Horwitz, a pioneer in this field, defined beliefs as ‘preconceived ideas about language learning’ (Horwitz 1987: 119). Horwitz’s classic study investigated how common certain beliefs about language learning were among students and teachers. She developed and used a 34 Likert-scale item questionnaire (the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory - BALLI) derived from comments which frequently arose in extensive interviews with learners and teachers. This tool has been used in several studies into language learners’ beliefs, and will be utilised as part of this study (see Chapter 3).

Willing (1985) also carried out an extensive investigation into the beliefs and preferences of language students. His study, along with two others carried out in the AMES in the 1980s; Brindley (1984) and Nunan (1988), uncovered differences between the beliefs held by students and teachers in English language courses. It was posited that one factor in this mismatch of beliefs was cultural background. Three other studies into students’ beliefs (Tumposky 1991, Yang 1993, Kuntz 1996) are significant because they show how factors such as student background and educational setting affect beliefs. All three studies relied on the administration of the BALLI. Tumposky (1991) concluded that culture contributes to motivation, while Yang (1993) and Kuntz (1996) found that ethnicity and culture influence the beliefs held by students.

Much of the research into students’ beliefs during this period was aimed at establishing a relationship between students’ beliefs and their uses of particular learning strategies. The studies seem to have been based, to a large degree, on the proposition that the ‘wrong’ beliefs of the learners, which led to ‘wrong’ strategy use, should be changed. However, without evidence which unequivocally proves a particular method or approach is best for a learner, it is problematic to consider
students’ beliefs as erroneous and attempt to change or modify them (de Prada 1998). Furthermore, while students may hold beliefs about language learning which are based on cultural or educational background, their choices of learning strategies may also be based on a personal cognitive style. Any teacher convinced that a specific approach or method (eg, the ‘communicative approach’) is the most effective way to learn a language will come into contact with students who hold different beliefs. The effects of this type of conflict of beliefs can be detrimental to the learning process, rather than improving it. It may result in demoralisation and hostility on the part of the students (Bassano 1986, Rees-Miller 1993), or even withdrawal from the course (Bailey 1983).

Furthermore, it has been argued that philosophies, beliefs about and approaches to learning and teaching are themselves culturally determined. The communicative approach, which continues to be the cornerstone of language teaching in the ELICOS centre in this study, is based on Canale and Swain’s (1980) model of communicative competence. Ellis (1996) maintains that this approach is based on generalisations about learning and educational practices which are uncritically assumed to be transferable across cultures. This study is aimed at critically evaluating one philosophy that is prevalent in Western education, that of autonomy.

Whilst the studies discussed so far have provided useful tools for investigating students’ beliefs, they derive from a limited view of beliefs, and do not take into account the broader context in which the informants operate. Horwitz (1988) herself, acknowledged the limitations of the BALLI, noting that a survey provides a static, cross-sectional view of student beliefs. For these reasons, a broader perspective is needed.

Kalaja (1995), in her criticism of the approach and methodology used in research into learners’ beliefs to date, argues for a more sociocultural perspective. She contends that one’s beliefs could be seen as ‘socially constructed, emerging from interaction with others, and therefore they would basically be non-cognitive and social in nature’ (Kalaja 1995: 196). She argues that rather than statable and static, beliefs are variable from one context to another and even within the same context. Hence students may
change their beliefs over time and, even on the same occasion, may offer conflicting views of the same phenomenon.

The approach proposed by Kalaja calls for a research methodology in which naturalistic or authentic, contextualised discourse data is collected and analysed within the wider socio-cultural and -historical perspectives, rather than relying on questionnaire data such as that used by Horwitz (1987), Yang (1993) and Kern (1995). This type of methodology acknowledges the learners as individuals who have brought to the learning task their own experiences, backgrounds and goals, but are operating in a context which has its own political, cultural and social history.

However, Kalaja’s position also has its limitations. As noted in Section 2.2.1, an individuals beliefs may be inconsistent with each other (Nespor 1987) or with varying levels of certitude (Rokeach 1968). Rather than an individual’s beliefs being subject to constant change according to the context, to the extent suggested by Kalaja, it may be that different beliefs are called into operation in different contexts, according to how central they are to one’s belief system or how connected they are to other beliefs. Hence, one focus of the data analysis in this study is to investigate and interpret the contextual influences on an individual’s expression of beliefs.

The literature on student beliefs agrees on the individual and varied nature of students’ beliefs. Kern (1995: 81) notes:

Because beliefs are based on idiosyncratic personal factors as well as general sociocultural forces, it is ultimately just as important to explain individual tendencies as it is to make generalisations about large groups of learners.

Spack (1997) also insists that the differences among individuals must be acknowledged (see Section 3.1) and advises professionals to be wary of stereotyping learners within their cultural groups. Hence, this study aims to focus on individuals from one cultural group, exploring differences as well as similarities.
In summary, the literature on learners' beliefs falls into two categories. Theorists investigating the relationship between learners' beliefs and their strategy use were often concerned with changing students' beliefs when they were considered deleterious to the learning process. Studies deriving from this perspective relied on large-scale research and, to a large degree, questionnaire responses. The second camp considers beliefs to be more contextually influenced, calling for discourse data and analysis which enables contextual factors to be investigated. With this in mind, a longitudinal and multi-perspective approach in data collection and analysis was taken in this study (see Chapter 3).

2.2.4 Research into the beliefs of teachers

The language learning process involves a complex co-constructed interaction between the students and their teacher. To fully understand this interaction, both the students and teachers, their characteristics, purposes, beliefs and expectations must be examined.

Research into teachers' beliefs in the field of ESL is a relatively recent development and researchers such as Nunan (1990), Burns (1992) and Richards and Lockhart (1994) have turned their attention to exploring and understanding the factors influencing the 'hidden pedagogy' of the classroom; the beliefs, attitudes, expectations and decisions which underpin teachers' behaviour. Paralleling the call for research which acknowledges the contextual features of learners' beliefs, more recent literature in the field of teachers' beliefs takes into account the context in which the teachers operate.

Richards and Lockhart (1994:3) described teachers' underlying belief systems as the 'information, attitudes, values, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning' which they build up over time and bring with them to the classroom. This experiential knowledge reflects the notion of the episodic nature of beliefs as expressed by Abelson (1979) and Nespor (1986). For this study, these accumulated underlying
beliefs will be referred to as a teachers’ personal theory or philosophy (after Pennington 1989:96).

Through her ethnographic-style research into the beliefs of six ESL teachers, Burns (1996) found that teachers’ beliefs were immensely complex and emerged from interrelated contexts, networks and levels of thinking and centred around connected and interacting ‘contextual’ levels. She proposed a framework, which will be used to frame the analysis of teachers’ beliefs in this study. This framework encompassed what she termed ‘the intercontextuality of teacher thinking and beliefs’ (Burns 1996: 157).

The framework consisted of three contextual levels, two of which are the focus of this study. At the broadest level the focus is institutional, involving the ‘normalised’ or conventionalised ways in which teachers interpret the organisational ideologies or philosophies. The second level is a classroom focus involving the personal philosophies, values and expectations teachers hold about language, learning and learners. Burns’ framework acknowledges that teachers’ beliefs and decisions are not simply based on a personal and individual philosophy, but embedded in a context, which is particularly pertinent to this study.

With regard to context, Kress (1989), in his exploration of critical literacy, refers to the ways in which institutions and social groupings talk (or write) as ‘discourses’ and defines them as ‘systematically organised sets of statements that give expression to the meanings and values of an institution’ (Kress, 1989: 7). While the focus of this study is not a critical discourse analysis, the term ‘discourse’ is used to refer to the values and meanings of institutions (such as TESOL, ELICOS, Western education) as articulated in language. It is used in the exploration of the relationship between individuals and the larger social processes in which they operate.
Finally, Freeman (1996), drawing on the work of structural linguists such as de Saussure, argues that the assumption that words can represent teachers’ thoughts, beliefs and knowledge provides only partial understanding of the relationships and social context that language embodies. Words are not expressions of individuals, but rather statements of connection to and within the social systems in which they are participants, and that teachers present meanings through their words.

Language, then, depends on a speech community to create and sustain meanings, and language data must be interpreted on the basis of relationships; the relationship between the teacher and her community and the context in which she works, and the relationship between the teacher and the researcher. Freeman refers to this type of analysis as a presentational approach, and argues that to understand language data one must understand where the words come from and the relationships it is presenting. He uses the term ‘speech communities’ to name these sources (Freeman 1996: 749).

For this study, the term ‘discourse’ is used to refer not only to the institutional meanings, values and beliefs expressed in language, but also to the relationship with that speech community. Hence, language data is interpreted to explore the organisational and personal philosophies it presents as well as the individual’s relationship with those discourses.

To conclude, the personal theories or philosophies which teachers bring to the classroom are seen to be accumulated through experience and normalised by the community within which they operate. An examination of teachers’ beliefs requires recognition of the organisational ideologies or philosophies which influence the construction of their beliefs, and the relationship between the teacher and her community and the context in which she works. The following sections will describe a current philosophy in education which has an impact on beliefs about the nature of language learning.
2.3 The philosophy of autonomy in second language learning

2.3.1 Autonomy and independence in language learning

A brief review of the literature reveals the extent to which the concept of autonomy has been an influence in the philosophies of second language teaching. In the ESL field, autonomy has been defined in a number of ways, but most refer to students taking responsibility for their learning, which involves decision making about one’s learning (Holec 1985, Dickinson 1995, Cotterall 1995).

Dickinson (1995), Little (1991) and Littlewood (1996) describe autonomy as comprised of two components. The first of these is a positive attitude (or willingness), which, according to Littlewood (1996) depends on the motivation and confidence to take responsibility for the choices required to operate autonomously. The second of these components is a capacity (or ability) for independent learning which can be characterised as critical reflection, decision making and independent action (Little 1995).

This capacity is described in the various literature as composed of a set of skills (Dickinson 1995), tactics (Cotterall 1995) and knowledge (Littlewood 1995), concerned with setting and prioritising objectives, choosing instructional materials, planning practice opportunities and monitoring and evaluating progress. The aim is for students to be active and independent in the learning process. One feature of this independence is a lessened reliance on the teacher as an authority figure, and greater self-monitoring, including the self-monitoring and correction of student errors.

In Western education systems autonomy has been justified as a goal at a number of levels. The first is ideological, where the argument is that the individual has the right to exercise his or her own choices in learning as in other areas, to self-exploration and the realisation of personal and group potential via language. A second level at which autonomy is argued for is psychological. It is argued that when we are in charge of our
own learning, that learning is more meaningful, more permanent and more focussed. It may also increase motivation, which in turn may lead to more successful learning (Dickinson 1995). This argument has arisen, in part, from the seminal research carried out into strategies and attitudes exhibited by the ‘successful’ language learner (Rubin 1975; Wenden 1991). However, the notion of a successful learner in these studies is very much bound in Western conceptualisations of learning and education. The cultural implications of this philosophy require examination.

Brindley (1984), in a series of interviews with teachers and learners in AMES, uncovered two different sets of beliefs regarding the nature of language and language learning. He suggested that one of the beliefs of the learners was that the teacher has a body of knowledge which the learner must acquire, and it is the role of the teacher to impart this knowledge. Contrasting with this was the teachers’ view that their role is to assist learners to become self-directed and independent. Cotterall (1995) also investigated learners’ beliefs about language learning and student-teacher roles and found that learners often expect the teacher to function as an authority figure in the classroom.

A key feature of autonomy is independence from the teacher, and implicit in this independence is a particular student-teacher relationship. If beliefs are formed through a process of enculturation, education and schooling (Van Fleet 1979), one’s perception of the student-teacher relationship is culturally influenced and, Atkinson (1997) argues, related to a particular world view. It follows, therefore that a philosophy of autonomy may be at odds with the beliefs held by second language learners, and an acceptance of this philosophy by learners may mean redefinition on their part of the teacher-student relationship and role.

In his discussion of critical thinking, Atkinson (1997) proposes a cognitive apprenticeship model, based on Vygotskian learning theory, in which the teacher-learner relationship is reconceptualised as an expert-novice relationship and the learner is socialised into a ‘western’ world view and ways of thinking. However, as
Hawkins and Irujo (1993) point out with regard to teacher education, a paradox is inherent in this educational philosophy. They ask:

How can we 'get' students to take responsibility for their learning without forcing them to accept our view of the learning process? (Hawkins and Irujo 1993:13)

Two features of many English language classrooms, and particularly EAP classes, which seem to be inherent in fostering learner autonomy, are 'getting' students to self-monitor their errors and develop independent critical thinking skills. These are discussed in sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 respectively.

2.3.2 Error correction

One area of English language learning and teaching in which student autonomy plays a key role is that of error correction and particularly the ability to monitor and correct one's errors.

The term 'error' has been used in a variety of ways in language teaching theory. A distinction between errors and mistakes was drawn by Corder (1981), who attributed mistakes in spontaneous speech or writing to performance rather than language competence. He argued that these mistakes were induced by slips of the tongue, lapses of memory or stress even though the correct form or use is part of the user's competence.

This distinction between errors and mistakes implies different classroom treatment. Errors indicate a gap between a learners' current language competence and a target language, and so require corrective treatment by others. In the case of mistakes, the learner is assumed to have the competence to produce the appropriate language. Correction by others may or may not be appropriate, but self-monitoring of these mistakes could be fostered.
However, much of the research into students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning does not refer to these distinctions between errors and mistakes. The focus has been on how much error (incorporating both errors and mistakes) correction should occur and by whom. This study also uses 'error' and 'error correction' as umbrella terms to refer to errors and mistakes and the corrective treatment given them in language classrooms.

In studies conducted by Willing (1988) and Nunan (1988) a number of areas related to the views held by teachers and students regarding language learning were investigated. Of the ten activities investigated, three showed a dramatic mismatch between the perceptions of the teachers and students. Two of these three practices were related to error correction. While teachers rated error correction in general as of low importance, the students rated it very highly. Conversely, teachers rated student self discovery of errors very highly, while students perceived it to be of low value for language learning.

Parrino (1987), reflecting on her experience as a second language learner, recommends that teachers should get to know their students before correcting their errors, because overcorrection may be deleterious to the students' language production. However, the reverse may also hold; undercorrection by teachers may lead to a degree of tension between students and their teacher.

This study was aimed at investigating the beliefs held by students and teachers about error correction within the framework of developing learner autonomy. By encouraging the self-monitoring and -correction of errors, teachers are fostering a less dependent student-teacher relationship and encouraging students to critically reflect on their learning and take independent decisions. To further this autonomous role students are required to be more evaluative of and detached from the learning process. The kinds of critical thinking skills this evaluation requires and their cultural implications are explored in the next section.
2.3.3 Critical thinking

Critical thinking\(^1\) has long been the domain of cognitive psychologists, only becoming a presence in ESL in the last decade. The critical thinking skills field has encountered problems of definition and classification similar to those faced by researchers investigating beliefs.

Most definitions of critical thinking include an element of reflection, creativity, interpretation, analysis or problem solving. Beyer (1985), in his review of the literature, notes that there is no consensus on a definition or list of skills, but that various writers have equated critical thinking skills with the higher order thinking skills in Bloom's taxonomy, that is, logical reasoning and problem solving. He concludes:

specialists today appear to agree that critical thinking is assessing the authenticity, accuracy and/or worth of knowledge, claims and arguments (Beyer 1985: 271).

One widely-accepted definition is that of Ennis (1987), who links critical thinking skills with belief and conative domains, and defines critical thinking as ‘reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do’ (Ennis 1987: 10). However, neither of these definitions take into account contextual factors, such as the educational setting, the role of culture and socio-political influences. In the development of critical thinking these are central considerations in a study such as this one.

Smith (1990) claims that to think critically, three conditions must be met. First, a high level of understanding of the specific subject is necessary. Secondly, one must have an attitude of 'relative scepticism ... a readiness to consider alternative explanations, not taking anything for granted when it might be reasonable to doubt.' The final pre-

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\(^1\) The use of critical thinking in this context does not include the traditions and perspectives of critical pedagogy and critical literacy, as propounded by theorists such as Freire and Pennycook.
requisite is the authority to be critical. It is the last two of these conditions that are particularly salient in regard to the teaching of critical thinking skills in L2 settings.

Adamson (1993) claims that, while 'sceptical' students can still emerge from more hierarchical and authoritarian schools and cultures, they do not necessarily have the authority to be critical or sceptical in Western academic culture. Not only may ESL students need to overcome a tendency to refrain from criticising authority, they also need to learn the culture-specific limits to criticism in a Western academic environment, that is 'how far they can go without violating the basic assumptions of Western academic culture' (Adamson 1993: 112). This requires a high degree of enculturation into Western academic society.

While Adamson contends that some of these conditions for critical thinking may be culturally influenced, others extend the argument to contend that critical thinking is itself a culturally based concept, and that, in fact, many cultures endorse modes of thought which almost diametrically oppose it (Atkinson 1997, Fox 1994).

Fox (1994), reflecting on years of research and experience with world majority (international) students in U.S. universities, states:

This thing we call 'critical thinking' or 'analysis' has strong cultural components. It is more than just a set of writing and thinking techniques - it is a voice, a stance, a relationship with texts and family members, friends, teachers, the media, even the history of one's country. This is why 'critical analysis' is so hard for faculty members to talk about; because it is learned intuitively it is easy to recognise ... but not so easily defined and is not at all simple to explain to someone who has been brought up differently. (Fox, 1994: 125)

Atkinson (1997) contends that this difficulty in defining critical thinking is an indication of its social and culturally-constructed nature. He continues the argument by citing studies of early language and literacy socialisation (Cochran-Smith, 1984, Heath, 1986, cited in Atkinson 1997: 75), arguing that children are socialised into a
particular world view from an early age. In the context of ESL, Ballard and Clanchy (1991) have argued that ways of thinking, learning and presenting ideas are culturally acquired and ESL students need to shift towards a more critical, analytical and self-reliant approach. This involves a process of enculturation towards and induction into the cultural community and discourse of the target language (in this case, not only English, but Australian academic English).

In summary, the perspective taken in this study is that while critical thinking has strong cultural components, and is a phenomenon of Western academic tradition, one must be wary of making generalisations based on cultural background. It is possible that 'sceptical' students can come from less self-directed cultures. Hence, this study will explore the similarities and differences between students from one cultural group, as well as investigate the process of enculturation they may experience in this particular learning context. Likewise, teachers' beliefs and conceptions of critical thinking will be examined and situated in the teaching context in which they work.

2.4 Conclusion

A brief review of the literature in this field shows that beliefs are difficult to define, characterise and measure. Much of the research has analysed beliefs within belief systems and defined them by contrasting beliefs with knowledge. This has laid the foundation for more recent research into teachers' and students' beliefs.

Most theorists agree that beliefs are created through a lifelong process of enculturation and social construction, which is normative in nature. The influence of the culture in the formation of beliefs is viewed as critical, providing structure, order and shared values. This is particularly pertinent in this study which seeks to investigate the beliefs of students from a particular cultural background who are operating in a foreign culture.
The initial focus on learner beliefs was linked to the area of learner strategy in language learning. The emphasis here was on eliciting and describing learner beliefs in order to change those beliefs which were perceived as producing strategies counter to current educational theory. Whether this attitude change is appropriate or plausible is controversial. More recently, researchers have argued that the social and contextual nature of learners' beliefs must be recognised by research methodology that incorporates longitudinal, multi-dimensional approaches, grounded in context.

Paralleling the move to a sociocultural perspective in research in learners' beliefs, a central issue is the organisational philosophies and discourses which influence the construction of teachers' beliefs. The personal theories or philosophies which teachers bring to the classroom are seen to be accumulated through experience, and normalised by the community within which they operate. This perspective requires analysis of language data that reveals the relationship between teachers and the discourses of the context in which they operate.

A current philosophy which guides much of the work in ELICOS, and particularly in the IAP context, is that of autonomy in learning. The literature revealed that this philosophy of education is not necessarily universal and in this context, the cultural implications of such an ideology require examination.

The literature shows that the few studies that have been carried out in this area note the value of understanding the beliefs about language learning held by students and teachers, and call for more research of this type. Features and limitations of these studies influenced the choice of research methods, which are described in the following chapter.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study, as outlined in Chapter 1, was firstly, to investigate if and how the beliefs of teachers and students differed regarding the development of learner autonomy and secondly, to explore the informants' perceptions of the process of change that may be involved in developing that autonomy.

The literature review in the last chapter foregrounded two different approaches to the study of learners' beliefs. The first involved broad-based studies which relied, to a large degree, on questionnaire data and the second was more concerned with sociocontextual aspects of beliefs, and so involved the collection and analysis of thick data. The approach taken for this research drew from both qualitative and quantitative traditions, reflecting the diffuse and complex nature of beliefs described by the literature review. This approach will now be discussed.

3.2 Methodological approach

The methodological approach had three key characteristics which stemmed from the theories explored in the literature review. Firstly, the research involved multiple data collection methods, as Kern (1995) and Spack (1997), amongst others, argue that it is just as important to investigate individual learners and their beliefs as it is to generalise about larger groups, and multiple methods of data collection enabled both. Secondly, the study was grounded in context, as it was argued in the literature review that contextual factors must be acknowledged and explored in order to understand the nature of beliefs. In this way factors such as the cultural and socioeducational features of the informants' worlds could be recognised. Thirdly, the study was longitudinal and quasi-ethnographic in its orientation. Rather than gaining only a cross-sectional view of the informants' beliefs, a fuller picture developed over the ten week course. The collection of data via ethnographic-style methods, such as interviews and classroom
observations, enabled students and teachers to express their beliefs and the relationships between themselves and the context in which they operate (Kalaja 1996, Freeman 1996). Furthermore, patterns and hypotheses could emerge during the course of the data collection and analysis, rather than being predetermined by the researcher (Nunan 1992).

The collection and analysis of data was carried out in two stages. The first stage, involving both questionnaires and interviews, had two aims. The first was to provide a sensitising focus (Binnie Smith 1996) and identify areas in which the beliefs of the students and teachers differed. While the literature indicated that learner autonomy was one area in which the beliefs of the students and teachers would diverge, questionnaires allowed for the key issues to be guided by the analysis of the data from the learners and teachers, not imposed by the researcher. Two features of the EAP setting which emerged were the issues of error correction and the development of critical thinking. By incorporating data related to two different aspects of the autonomy issue, different perspectives of the complex area of student’ and teachers’ beliefs were able to be revealed. The second aim of the questionnaire and initial interview was to select a focus group to provide insights into the issues.

The second stage relied upon the collection and analysis of authentic language data from a smaller number of informants to provide an interpretive, contextual understanding of the meanings found in their discourses (Kalaja 1996).

3.3 Selection and description of setting and informants

3.3.1 Selection and description of setting

Rosedale English Language Centre was a large ELICOS centre, part of a major university. The 320 students at the centre were fee-paying and approximately sixty percent planned to attend university in Australia. The focus of the centre on academic preparation matched the aims of this study to investigate the philosophy of learner autonomy in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes. The vast majority of students came from South East Asian countries, which included South Korea,
Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, Japan and Vietnam. A small percentage of students came from South America and Europe.

The centre ran twenty-two classes ranging from elementary to advanced levels in the General English stream, and in the EAP stream, from intermediate to advanced-level IAP (Intensive Academic Program). Included in these classes were four IELTS (International English Language Testing System) preparation classes. The students in the Academic and IELTS classes constituted almost half of the centre's enrolments for that course.

3.3.2 Selection and description of informants

The sample group was restricted to advanced or pre-advanced language levels so that the student informants would be best able meet the linguistic demands of the research topic.

The initial data were collected via the use of a questionnaire, and seven classes consisting of a pre-advanced and an advanced general English class, two IELTS preparation classes, two EAP classes and one IAP class, elected to complete the questionnaire. The 54 students' ages ranged from eighteen to thirty-eight and they represented each of the South East Asian nationalities listed above.

The ten teachers of these classes were also involved in this study. The teachers ranged in age from twenty-eight to fifty-five. Four were male and six female. They were all qualified TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers with more than five years' teaching experience.

A focus group was selected using the biographical information given in the first questionnaire, from the larger group of fifty-four students and ten teachers. This group comprised three students in the IAP class and their two teachers. The IAP class was selected for this study for two key reasons. As noted in the first chapter, all of the
students in the IAP class will go on to tertiary education in Australia and so the class is representative of the academic aspirations of a majority of the students at Rosedale. Secondly, the course aims to prepare students for ‘successful participation in the academic discourse within the environment of the university’ (Rosedale IAP Curriculum Document, 1). This process of initiation into the academic culture, which involves the development of learner autonomy, is likely to be experienced by many ELICOS students in their transition to university. The potential changes in students’ beliefs about autonomy during this transition from one culture to another, and one learning context to another was a focus of this study.

As argued in the literature review, generalisations cannot necessarily be drawn about students from similar cultural backgrounds (Spack 1997). One aim of this study was to explore the diversity that students bring to the classroom and in order to do so, a focus group was formed which comprised of students of similar cultural backgrounds. The students were all Indonesian women aged between twenty-two and twenty-five and will be referred to as Ira, Jini and Lisa. Furthermore, all of the women were of Chinese background; two had a parent born in China while the third had Chinese grandparents. They had all completed at least high school level and planned to go on to further education at Australian universities; one at undergraduate level, the other two at post-graduate level.

Ira, at 22, was the youngest of the three students, but had been in Australia the longest. She had studied English at high school, then at a language centre in Sydney for nine months. She had also completed an 18 month diploma in Early Childhood Development in Sydney. She aimed to study a Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies at a university in Melbourne and then return to Jakarta to start up a child care centre. She spoke English fluently and her pronunciation was the closest to an Australian native-speaker of the group. She had already gained a score of 6.5 in an IELTS test. The general requirement for entry into her chosen course was 7.0, but she had been accepted into first year due to her previous studies in Australia in this field. She

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2 The real reference is not given to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants.

1 The women soon pointed out that they were from different parts of Indonesia - something they saw as relatively significant.
believed the most important thing she would learn from the course was essay-writing skills.

Jini was 25 years old and had studied English at high school and university in Indonesia and at Rosedale for 10 weeks. She had completed a law degree in Jakarta and planned to study international law at post-graduate level. Her motivations for studying in Australia were numerous. Her parents had both studied in Australia and so she felt encouraged by their experience. On her return she believed she would be far more assured of gaining a ‘good job’ and could command a much higher salary because Indonesians have more respect for people who graduate from overseas universities and ‘They’re crazy about Western education.’ (Interview #1; Week 2) She was aiming to achieve an IELTS score of 6.5 for entry into her chosen course. She stated a belief that the four macro skills of speaking, writing, listening and speaking would be equally important components of the course for her.

Lisa was also 25 years old and was the most recently arrived of the focus group. She had arrived in Melbourne to begin this course, with ten years’ of English language learning at high school and two semesters of university English language study behind her. She was considered by both teachers to have the least-developed language skills of the three students and she herself often spoke of the difficulties she had in understanding the classes and how this affected her confidence. She had studied accounting in Indonesia and was hoping to study finance or business administration at post-graduate level in Melbourne.

It was argued in the first chapter that the relationship between the students and teachers is pivotal in the co-construction of the learning process, and so in order to fully explore the context in which the students were operating, the two teachers of this class also participated in the more in-depth process of interviews and classroom observation. One teacher, who will be referred to as Rowena, was female, aged twenty-eight and had been at the centre for two years. Her experience included high school level and adult ELICOS English teaching. Her qualifications consisted of a B.A., Dip. Ed. and an RSA certificate in TEFLA (Teaching English as a Foreign
Language). The second teacher, referred to as Colin, was male, aged fifty-five and had been in the education sector for the majority of his working life. His experience included high school teaching, curriculum development, administration and teaching and coordinating positions in ELICOS. His qualifications included a B.A., Dip Ed., M.Ed., an RSA certificate in TEFLA and a Grad. Dip in TESOL. The diversity apparent in the backgrounds of these two teachers can be considered representative of the range found in teachers at this centre. Shared beliefs held by the two teachers may be a reflection of the institutional context and discourse community in which they work. These two teachers, who had worked together teaching IAP for a number of courses, had developed the curriculum for this class for the centre. They both agreed they had a good working relationship.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were completed by the students in the six participating classes on two occasions: the beginning of the course and at the end (10-week mark) of the course. The questionnaires consisted of Likert-scale items, multiple choice questions and rank-order items, as well as open-ended questions, to probe more deeply into learners’ and teachers’ perceptions. Because the teacher questionnaires were utilised primarily to identify areas in which the beliefs of the students and teachers differed, and this study was not concerned with change in the teachers’ beliefs, the teachers of the six classes were asked to complete questionnaire only at the beginning of the course.

After the questionnaires were completed, the responses were collated and tabulated, and the resulting issues became the focus of the interviews, journals and observations. The questionnaire was trialed with a small number of students similar to the final sample group, to check the clarity of the wording and layout and relevance to the
research question. Following the trial, two questions were re-worded to simplify them appropriate to the level of the students.

The questionnaire for this study combined items from instruments designed by Horwitz (1987) and Willing (1985). Horwitz’s seminal study into learners’ beliefs was conducted with American university students of foreign languages (French, German and Spanish). Horwitz devised the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) from interview data from foreign language and ESL teachers and students. Two versions of the BALLI were written; one for students of foreign languages and a simpler version for ESL students. The second version was the source of items for the current study. The items selected from the BALLI related to the teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about the nature of language learning; learning and communication strategies and motivations for learning the language.

Willing’s (1985) study was focussed on the learning preferences and styles of students of English as a second language, and was carried out in the AMES. The study was aimed at identifying learner types according to the responses given to items relating to preferred class activities; teacher behaviour and interpersonal aspects of language learning. Whilst this study was not concerned with investigating learner types, particular items in the instrument devised by Willing were appropriate in exploring students’ and teachers’ beliefs about language learning practices.

These particular questionnaires were selected for two reasons. First, as Griffee (1996) points out, data elicitation instruments developed by teacher-researchers are based on their intuition and the best knowledge available to them at the time, which although necessary, are not enough. Because of this, the questionnaires which had been developed through extensive broad-based research were deemed more reliable than an instrument based on my perceptions. Secondly, the instruments designed by Horwitz and Willing have been utilised in a number of studies in a variety of contexts, and so comparisons with the results of those studies could be drawn.
Questionnaires are an economical way of gathering relatively large amounts of data which can be quantified in various ways (Nunan 1989). Furthermore, they allow patterns to emerge and by including open-ended questions it was possible to avoid the pitfall of predetermined categories limiting the scope of the research. In fact, as will be discussed in Section 3.5, as the study continued, more emphasis was given to the key issues that emerged from the collection and analysis of the more qualitative data, rather than being limited by the scope of the questionnaire.

Kern (1995) underlines the methodological problems of questionnaires to examine learner beliefs, stating that open-ended interviews with a set of topics or probe questions may yield more valid findings, particularly when dealing with learners from other cultural and language backgrounds. This problem was addressed by the collection of a large amount of data via the use of more naturalistic methods such as individual and group interviews.

### 3.4.2 Interviews

The students in the focus group took part in both individual and group interviews in English over the period of the course. The individual interviews, of approximately 40 minutes' duration, were held in the second and sixth weeks of the course, while a group interview of 30 minutes was conducted in the final week. The teachers took part in individual interviews of 60-90 minutes at the beginning and the end of the course. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order for the actual language used to be captured, as well as leaving the interviewer free to participate.

The interviews were semi-structured, with a number of stimulus questions, asking learners and teachers to discuss their beliefs in greater detail and provide the depth of understanding which is not possible with a questionnaire. The semi-structured format allowed for the interviewee to have a degree of control over the course of the interview, while allowing me the flexibility to guide the interview to cover the issues I wished to explore (Nunan 1992).
The content interviews was guided by responses to the questionnaires, journal entries and data collected from previous interviews, focussing on the differences and similarities between the teachers' and students' beliefs as well as any other significant features. As Neuman (1997) points out, qualitative research is often inductive and the results of early data analysis guided subsequent data collection. Some informal contact also occurred between the researcher and teachers during this period.

3.4.3 Journals

The focus group of students were also asked to write weekly entries in a journal on topics drawn from the data as they were collected and analysed. The journal entries were guided by focus, but were also semi-structured, allowing students to write as freely and fluently as possible. Whilst the aim was to allow for a more reflective text the students required a good deal of prompting on my behalf. Furthermore, I was conscious of the written requirements of the course the students were undertaking and so remained flexible and relaxed in the collection of the journals.

3.4.4 Observations

Classroom observation was another method used to collect data and to provide a common reference point between the students', teachers' and my perspectives. As with the interviews, the focus for each observation depended somewhat on the data collected previously, and the inductive nature of this type of research.

A total of eight hours of observations of classes held by both teachers were carried out, with the aim of grounding the interview and journal data in the context of the classroom. The types of activities the students were involved in and how, the length of time spent on those activities and the speech and practices of the students and teachers considered relevant to the thesis questions were noted. Purposive sampling was also carried out, whereby student-student interactions in small groups and some teacher-student and teacher-class interactions were audio-recorded and then transcribed.
3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis was influenced by the aims of the thesis as well as the practical considerations such as time and available resources (Silverman 1993). Due to the relatively short period of data gathering the collection and analysis of data was concurrent. This concurrent collection and analysis of data enabled the researcher to identify themes and patterns emerging from the interviews. It was also aimed at serving as a check that sufficient and appropriately focused information was being gathered before the completion of the fieldwork (Binnie Smith 1996). The four main steps were organising, coding, reducing and interpreting the data (Lynch 1996).

Because of the dualistic nature of the data collected for this study, two different and overlapping methods of analysis were carried out. First, with regard to the questionnaire data, the students' and teachers' responses to the Likert-scale items were collated, tabulated and analysed descriptively. The results were presented in percentages. As was the case in previous studies using these instruments (Horwitz 1988, Kern 1995, Kuntz 1996), for the purposes of reporting the results the scales were collapsed to three categories; agree, neutral and disagree (or important, neutral and not important). This enabled simpler comparisons and contrasts of data between the teachers and students and across items. In this way, the focus questions for the interviews, observations and journals were also more easily identified.

Secondly, the language data collected from the interviews was coded and sorted into descriptive categories using a content analysis approach (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). This enabled the discernment of common themes, which in turn, led to topics for the following interviews. Refinement of the research questions also occurred over the period of the study. The coding and analysis of the language data foregrounded the notions of autonomy, critical thinking and error correction as salient and central issues for the teachers and students in the focus group, and highlighted differences in the beliefs they held in regard to these issues. These issues then become the focus of the study.
It was argued in the literature review (Kalaja 1995, Freeman 1996) that content analysis does not allow for the interpretation of the social nature of beliefs and their expression. To overcome this, discourse analysis of the language data was also employed. With regard to the student data, interpretation of the data was limited due to the language ability of the students. This is described in section 3.6. The features of discourse analysis that were utilised included the use of topicalisation (Silverman 1993), and metadiscursive markers (Brown and Levison 1987).

The analysis of the language data collected from the teachers incorporated the features noted above, but the interpretation of the data was extended using Freeman’s (1996) presentational approach. As noted in the literature review, Freeman argues for an approach which recognises the socially-constructed nature of language and the expression of one’s knowledge and values. In this approach, language data is examined to explore the relationships created in the particular context and the sources form which that language is drawn.

### 3.6 Limitations of the research design

There are three main methodological limitations to this study. Firstly, one must be aware of the context in which the data were gathered and interpreted. As discussed in the literature review, Freeman (1996) argues that words are not expressions of individuals, but rather statements of connection to and within the social systems in which they are participants. The relationship between the researcher and teachers must be borne in mind, considering that the teachers and interviewer are relating a particular social construction of themselves in the interviewer/researcher dyad.

With regard to the student data, it must be recognised that the students are operating outside their cultural communities. Whilst the argument against generalising about any particular cultural group has been made, the cultural factors which may impinge on the students’ expression of their beliefs must be considered. According to Oerter
(1991) from an Indonesian perspective, individual and societal welfare go hand in
hand. Consequently, maturity may be shown by the control of one's desires or
opinions when they are in conflict with the well-being of the group. This may restrict
the level to which the students were likely to disagree with or be openly critical of
their teacher, the interviewer, or with each other in a group interview.

The final problem was that the analysis of language data was not the same for the
teachers and students. The students were operating with a limited language
proficiency, which, although of an advanced level, could not be described as 'near-
native speaker'. It was difficult to draw inferences from the limited language range
present in the student data, as the same mastery of language as the native speakers
could not be assumed. Consequently, the comparison of the beliefs of the teachers and
students was limited by the analysis of the student data. The conclusions of the study
reflect this; they show a more in-depth interpretation of the teachers' beliefs, and
wider implications drawn from that interpretation.

3.7 Conclusion

Given the topic and the research conditions, it was desirable to draw from both
qualitative and quantitative methods in two stages. The first stage enabled key issues
within the perspective of learner autonomy to emerge from the data and guide the
following stage. The data collected via quasi-ethnographic methods gave me detailed
qualitative data relating to individual experiences and beliefs, because it was argued
that it is just as important to investigate individual learners and their beliefs as it is to
generalise about larger groups. This enabled me to explore the interaction between the
individual, cultural and contextual factors in the construction and expression of
beliefs. In the following chapter the results of this investigation are presented, along
with a detailed discussion.
4. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

As has been outlined in the previous chapter, the purpose of this research was to explore differences in the beliefs about autonomy in language learning held by the students and teachers in an ELICOS centre. The literature review suggested that specific beliefs, and consequently any changes in beliefs, are difficult to measure and track, due in part to their deeply entangled and ill-defined nature, and in part to the effect of context and dominant discourses on the expression of beliefs. However, exploring the beliefs, values and philosophies of the protagonists in a language classroom can lead to greater understanding of this phenomenon, particularly in regard to a dominant philosophy in language learning, that of fostering student autonomy and self-empowerment. This chapter reports on the results of this study into the beliefs of a group of students and teachers regarding autonomy, in particular, error correction and critical thinking.

The second section of this chapter focuses on the results of this study regarding students’ beliefs about error correction and critical thinking. Where data was gathered via the use of questionnaires, a table presenting the results appears at the beginning of the section, followed by an explanation and analysis. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions, interviews, journal entries and observations provides an in-depth view of the beliefs of the students in the focus group.

The third section of this chapter investigates the beliefs the focus teachers hold regarding error correction and critical thinking in the IAP class and their views on change the students may experience. The relevant data from the interviews and observations are incorporated into each subsection. The conclusion provides a summary of the key findings and a link to the recommendations given in chapter five.
4.2 Students' beliefs about error correction and critical thinking

4.2.1 Students' beliefs about error correction by teachers

Previous studies in students and teachers' preferences for particular methodologies have shown mismatches in beliefs in the area of error correction (Willing, 1988; Nunan, 1988 and Kern, 1995). Error correction also appeared to be an area of tension between teachers and students in the preliminary questionnaire and the implications of this tension are immediately relevant to classroom practice. For these reasons, it became a focus of this study.

This subsection and the next explores two dimensions of error correction; error correction by teachers and self-correction of errors. No distinction is made here between errors and mistakes (see Section 2.3.3), and the term error is used to refer to both written and spoken errors.

As shown in Table 4.1 below, at the beginning of the course forty-five of the fifty-three students responding to this item believed that it was useful for teachers to correct all their errors in class. Of this number, half believed that this was a very useful teacher activity. However, only forty percent of the teachers believed that this was a useful practice, and none of them considered it very useful. At the end of the course, the beliefs of the students had not altered a great deal. The results showed only a five percent decrease in the degree to which the students believed that teacher correction of errors is useful, evidencing a considerable and sustained difference between the teachers' and students' beliefs. Interviews with the focus group provided some further insights into the students' and teachers' beliefs about error correction.
Table 4.1 Teacher correction of errors

Responses to Item 2.5:
In class I like the teacher to correct all my errors. (Student questionnaire)
Correction of all student errors in class. (Teacher questionnaire)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start of course</th>
<th>End of course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student group (n=53)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher group (n=10)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students in the focus group were fairly representative of the total body of student respondents, ranging from perceiving teacher error correction to be very useful, to a neutral stance on this item. At the end of the course, Jini’s stated belief that she found teacher correction of all student errors to be very useful had not changed. Neither had Ira’s neutral position changed. Lisa’s attitude to this area of language learning had weakened from finding it useful to neutral.

Comments from the students in interviews concur with the literature which suggests students believe that the teacher has a body of knowledge, which the learners need to acquire (Brindley, 1984, Nunan, 1988).

Extract 4.1 Lisa - Interview #2 (Week 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Um, but if you’re speaking with other students, would you like the teacher to correct you? If the teacher, say you’re, if we’re two students and we’re speaking and the teacher’s here listening, would you like the teacher to correct you</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>Of course, I know good, what I fault, what I, what I mis, our, my mistake, maybe.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ah huh, yeh. And in your writing, ah, do you have, ah do you get that corrected?</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Yeh, yeh, lot, from my essay, especially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Mm hm. Yeh, and do you like every mistake to be corrected?</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Yes, of course, because they can improve my writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Mm hm.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Ability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Transcription convention: \| is used to indicate overlapping dialogue of interviewee(s) and interviewer.
Extract 4.2 Ira - Journal Entry #4 (Week 8)

I believe that I will learn English very well at Rosedale. Because our teachers (Rowena and Colin) know our weakness points in English and they are able to help me to improve my English.

Two points can be made from these excerpts. Firstly, Ira’s comments seemed to reflect a reliance on the teacher as the holder of knowledge. Both students believed that their language will improve through the teachers’ ability to discern their errors and weaknesses and correct them. It is difficult to ascertain whether Lisa’s reference to ‘they’ in L3 denoted teachers or mistakes, but in either case, the correction of all errors by teachers was believed to be a path to greater language ability. Secondly, Lisa seemed to view teacher error correction as an opportunity to learn from one’s mistakes. She states, ‘Of course I like teacher correct me’ without hesitation, implying that this is a strongly held belief. She does not view error correction by teachers as stressful, but a normal and necessary part of their role in her language learning. The belief of one of the teachers of this class, however, is quite the opposite. She declared her belief that, ‘Any kind of correction is stressful’. Interestingly, Lisa did discuss the issue of stress in relation to differences between her learning preferences and the teachers’ teaching style (Extract 4.4, below), and the subsequent need to adapt, but the topic of error correction did not elicit a response about stress.

When asked during interview if the teachers corrected them enough, both of these students believed the level of correction was not sufficient (Interview #2). It would seem that the difference between the students’ and teachers’ beliefs about the value of teacher correction of error led to a tension between how often the students wished to be corrected and how often the teachers wished to correct in class. This issue will be further explored in Section 4.3.1.

4.2.2 Students’ beliefs about self-correction of errors

As noted in the literature review, error correction may be carried out by teachers, peers or oneself. The perceived difference between the teachers’ and students’ beliefs in the
questionnaire responses regarding teacher error correction suggested there might be a similar difference in their beliefs regarding self-correction of errors. The mismatch found in this study with regard to self-correction of errors was also evident in the study carried out by Nunan (1988), and so considered worth investigating.

As indicated in Table 4.2, at the beginning of the course the students generally supported the idea of self-monitoring of errors, but not to the same extent as the teachers. Nine of the ten teachers believed this to be a useful practice, with five of those nine perceiving it to be very useful. By the end of the course a greater percentage of students valued finding and correcting one’s own mistakes; signifying a small shift towards the beliefs held by the teachers.

**Table 4.2 Self-correction of errors**

**Responses to Item 2.6:**
I like the teacher to let me find and correct my own mistakes. *(Student questionnaire)*
Allowing students to find and correct their own mistakes. *(Teacher questionnaire)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Start of course</th>
<th>End of course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td></td>
<td>Useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student group (n=53)</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher group (n=10)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students in the focus group, again, seemed to be fairly representative of the total body of respondents with regard to their questionnaire responses. Lisa’s attitude to finding her own mistakes changed from ‘neutral’ to ‘very useful’, representing the greatest shift in the group. Jini declared she believed this practice to be very useful at both the beginning and the end of the course. Ira’s response was also consistent; rating this aspect of language learning as useful in both questionnaires.
Discussions with the students regarding self-correction of errors highlighted the individual nature of the beliefs held. As noted, Lisa's responses to the questionnaire item showed the greatest shift, and her comments in the middle of the course, shown in Extract 4.3 below, seemed to reflect a degree of ambivalence towards and lack of confidence about self-correction of errors.

**Extract 4.3 Lisa - Interview #2 (Week 6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>And do you think you’re learning to correct your own mistakes?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Learning to ...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Correct your own ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Oh, yeh. It is very difficult. ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>... Oh, okay. And do you think you can learn to correct your own mistakes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>I try.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeh. What about when you go to university. What about correcting your mistakes then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Mm, you mean, if there is an assignment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeh, what will you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>[laughs] Maybe I, I, if I, have a trouble, maybe I ask my friend, or if my friends cannot find, cannot solve the problem, I will ask the teacher again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lisa stated in the first half of the extract that it is very difficult to learn to correct one's own mistakes, but that she was trying to learn to do this. She did not express the belief that she would learn these skills, and in fact, in the second half of the extract, she referred to friends and finally the teacher as the authority from which she would seek help. It would seem that she believed she would not master the ability to self-monitor her errors, but would remain reliant on those she believed were more knowledgeable.

By the end of the course, however, Lisa had shown a marked shift of two opinion categories in the value she placed on self-correction of errors; from a neutral stance to believing the practice to be very useful. Accordingly, she ranked 'Learning how to find and correct my own errors' first out of five learning activities. When asked to explain this ranking, she responded, 'I can edit my assignment by myself if I study my master'. This seemed to reflect a more independent approach to self-correction, expressed, similar to the philosophy of the teachers (see section 4.3.1) through language of self-regulation and autonomy, such as 'can edit' and 'by myself'.
There was a notable change in the degree of confidence Lisa expressed in her ability to self-monitor and correct her errors. From expressions like, ‘very difficult’ and ‘I try’ during the interview in the middle of the course, she used ‘I can’ in her response at the end of the course. Interestingly, Lisa’s response to questionnaire Item 6; ‘I believe I will learn to speak English well’ changed from neutral at the beginning of the course to strongly agree at the end, which seemed to indicate a much greater confidence in her language learning ability and achievement. It may be that her level of confidence and perception of herself as an achieving, independent learner were intertwined with her beliefs about language learning and the values placed on independence in the environment in which she was studying.

However, this change that Lisa seemed to be experiencing was not easy. In extract 4.4 Lisa noted the stress she was experiencing and described her belief that every student must go through this process of adaptation. For her this stress was current difficult to deal with.

**Extract 4.4 Lisa - Interview #1 (Week 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Mm hm. Okay. If, if the teaching style doesn’t match how you learn [slower], what can you do, or what do you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>I feel stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>But, ah, maybe every people, every student have to adapt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Ah huh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>The first time I feel very difficult, but now I try to adapt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Mm hm. And are you adapting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Yeh, a little bit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Extracts 4.5 and 4.6 below, both Jini and Ira expressed a similar compulsion to adapt to the teaching style that they were experiencing in Australia. However, the most salient feature of their language is not how difficult the change was. In neither of the interviews with Jini and Ira were they asked why they had changed, but both topicalised the notion of an outside agent and a necessity to change. Whilst discussing the nature of change they used phrases such as, ‘we have to do it’, ‘no choice’, ‘they make us’. This seemed quite significant in light of Lisa’s comment that all students had to adapt to the different teaching style in Extract 4.2. The compulsion they felt to adapt can be seen as a pragmatic consideration in their
preparation for academic success. This concept of the need to change one’s values and preferences to reflect the dominant discourse of the Australian education context is a significant and recurring theme in this study, and is discussed further in Section 4.2.4.

Extract 4.5 Jini - Interview #2 (Week 6)

T: Do you think it’s important to correct your own mistakes first?
J: Yes ...
T: ... Do you think your view of having your mistakes corrected has changed during this course? For example, do you think you correct more of your own mistakes now than you did before, when you started this course?
J: Yes.
T: And you’ve learnt to do that?
J: Yes.
T: How?
J: I mean, like, before, my writing the essay, I can’t, but now, um, getting used to it.
T: That’s good.
J: I mean, because we have to do it, no, no choice. [laughs]

Extract 4.6 Ira - Interview #2 (Week 6)

T: Yeh. Is, is do they [the teachers] correct you often enough?
I: Mm, not really.
T: No?
I: Sometimes they, like, they make us think, like critical thinking, that’s what always Colin say.
[laughs]. Yeh, it’s make you, like think well, what mistakes you’re making, or well, that tell you, or then how can I improve that, or why I make that mistake sometimes.
T: And is that mostly in writing?
I: Yes, mostly in writing. And, yeh, at first it’s really hard for me because I get used to the old style of study. But now I feel that it’s, I think it’s better because it’s make me think.

Two further points can be made from Ira’s comments. Firstly, they reflected understanding of why the teachers encourage the students to correct their own errors. Initially she did not state it as her own belief; she referred to the external authority of the teacher, ‘That’s what always Colin say.’ The end of her comment, however, using the pronoun ‘I’, seemed to reflect a more personal value associated with self-correction. It may be that Ira’s language reflects two different discourses regarding the value of self-correction of error; the discourse of the teachers and the context in which she is learning and her own personal discourse, and a process of assimilating one into the other.
Secondly, Ira made a link between the teachers’ attitudes towards error correction and critical thinking. She perceived them both as features of the learning context that ‘make us think’, by fostering learner autonomy. The students’ beliefs about the value of critical thinking as a feature of the IAP course are explored in the next section.

4.2.3 Students’ beliefs about critical thinking

The literature review noted that critical thinking is generally considered to include an element of reflection, creativity, interpretation, analysis or problem solving. Teaching and learning critical thinking is considered a key feature of many EAP/IAP courses, and the course in which the teachers and students of this study participated was not an exception.

Critical thinking arose as an issue with two of the students in interviews in the second week of the course. Until then, they had perceived their needs and expectations in terms of language macro-skills and general development of an academic style in writing and speaking, with no reference to the notion of analysis and critical thinking. Whereas only one student (Ira) was familiar with the concept of critical thinking at the beginning of the course, by the second week it had become a salient feature for all three students.

During the first interviews, both Jini and Lisa, when comparing the educational styles in Indonesia and Australia, topicalised critical thinking; that is, they introduced it as a particular topic into the interview (Silverman, 1993).

Extract 4.7 Jini - Interview #1 (Week 2)

| I | Mm hm... what do you think, when you say the behaviour of the teacher, what do you mean? |
| J | Because like in Indonesia, we can’t, like if you want to say to the teacher, ‘I don’t agree with you’, it’s no good. In Indonesia we really have to respect with the teacher. So, like they just give us the material, give, give, give and copy and we just have to accept. So in Indonesia, your critical thinking cannot be built. Different, in here you can, teacher are like friends ... |
Extract 4.8 Lisa - Interview #1 (Week 2)

| T | What do you think of the education style here in Melbourne? |
| L | I think it's good, because, ah, we must, you know, discuss together with some friends and, and give the critical thinking about, about that discussion. |
| T | Yeh, about the problem or the situation. And is there more critical thinking here than in Indonesia? |
| L | Yeh, because in Indonesia just practice and then just play make conversation. |
| T | Uh huh. Does it suit you, this style? Do you like it? |
| L | Yes, but I'm not used to, so it's very hard for me to find the critical thinking. |

Because the topicalisation of critical thinking was performed by the students in both these extracts, it would seem that they perceived this as an important issue. It may have been that because it was relatively new to them, critical thinking was the most accessible feature of learning in this context to compare with their previous language learning environment.

Noteworthy is the shift Jini made in her use of personal pronouns in Extract 4.12. When referring to the teaching style in Indonesia and the relationship students have with their teachers, she used the first person plural; 'we really have to respect the teacher', 'give us the material'. Beliefs regarding the student/teacher relationship are considered to be formed at an early age during the processes of enculturation and education (Van Fleet 1979, Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Jini's use of the first person in her comments about student and teacher roles in Indonesia could indicate beliefs which are part of the Indonesian educational culture and learnt at a young age. These may be central to her belief system and therefore strongly held and not easily changed. Interestingly, Jini's stated belief that teacher error correction was very useful, which implies a particular teacher role, remained strong across the duration of the course.

In contrast, when she commented on the notion of critical thinking as related to the student/teacher relationship in Australia, she used the second person. Also, when discussing the possibility of a student challenging a teacher in Indonesia, she used the second person; 'if you want to say to the teacher, 'I don't agree with you'. This may indicate a process of change or adoption of values in progress. While Jini was adapting to the learning context in which she found herself and adopting the value of
critical thinking, she seemed to maintain some distance between herself and the discourse of that environment by using the second person.

Finally, Jini also used the phrase ‘have to’ twice in this extract, implying there is no choice or autonomy in the education system she experienced in Indonesia. However, she used a similar expression to describe the adjustment to ‘western’ learning and self-monitoring. While one of the philosophies discussed with the teachers regarding language and academic learning in the IAP course was of autonomy and empowering of the individual, the students’ language did not always reflect an independent decision on their behalf. This paradox will be further explored in Section 4.3.4.

One of the teachers believed that there was emotional resistance to critical thinking and analysis because they are skills which are foreign to students and in many of their cultures they are not encouraged to ‘think for themselves’ (see Section 4.3.4). However, the data collected from the three Indonesian students would seem to indicate a general and reasonably rapid acceptance of the value attributed by the teachers to critical thinking and analysis. Jini (Interview #3) explained this assent by stating:

We just hear from, ah, Rowena that in university you have to do critical thinking.

The students had similar instrumental goals in that they all aimed to go on to further studies in Australia. It may be that, because of their beliefs regarding the authority of a teacher, the students accepted the teachers’ values that these skills were a necessary key to success at university, and in a pragmatic move were in the process of accommodating this value within their belief system.

Interestingly, however, there was no evidence of a critical evaluation by the students of the compulsion to acquire critical thinking skills. It may be that the adoption of the values was the first stage in becoming more critical and evaluative and, consequently, developing the authority to challenge the system they would enter.
4.2.4 Implications of findings about student beliefs

In summary, with regard to the issue of error correction, the mismatch between students’ and teachers’ beliefs as shown in the questionnaire data was appreciable and remained so across the ten week period. The students believed teacher error correction was fundamental to their language learning, which seemed to reflect a reliance on the teacher as the holder of knowledge. The preference the students expressed for more rather than less teacher error correction seemed to be a consequence of this belief.

The students and teachers were in closer agreement on the issue of self-correction, and the questionnaire data also indicated a greater shift in the students’ beliefs in this area than with regard to teacher correction. Certainly, the comments of the students in the focus group reflected an acceptance of the need to self-correct, but two of the students continued to refer back to the teacher as the authority, which could be related to their beliefs about the student/teacher relationship developed through early experiences of enculturation and education. Also evident in the students’ comments was a compulsion by an outside agent to adapt to the teaching style and take on the values dominant in the new learning environment regarding autonomy and self-reliance.

Two salient issues were noted in relation to the students’ beliefs about the value of critical thinking. Firstly, the students expressed a pressure to change their beliefs and adapt to the context in which they were now studying. The theme of lack of choice in the process of change recurred in each section of the data analysis, and will be examined further in Section 4.3.3.

Secondly, while the students seemed to accept the need to develop critical thinking, and were practising these skills in class, they did not submit the beliefs of this academic culture to any process of critical analysis or evaluation. Consequently, the extent to which the students had actually internalised the evaluative and analytical skills which they had come to believe were necessary for success in their future studies is arguable. It may also be that the students had not developed the authority to
be critical of the academic culture, which Adamson (1993) argues requires a high level of acculturation into Western academic society.

The analysis of the language data regarding error correction and critical thinking evidenced what seemed to be the expression of beliefs in two different discourses; that of the students' prior educational experiences and that of the context in which they were now taking part. Whilst it seemed that the students had taken on the values of the institution, some distance was still placed between themselves and the discourse of the dominant culture.

A key factor implicated in the students' seeming adoption of the belief in the importance of critical thinking was the influence of the teachers. The students seemed to adopt these values on the basis of the teachers' recommendations. So, to gain a more balanced view of this process, it was necessary to look at the role of the teachers, their beliefs and their personal philosophies. Section 4.3 will cover this.

4.3 Teachers' beliefs about error correction and critical thinking

4.3.1 Teachers' beliefs about error correction

As the data in tables 4.1 and 4.2 indicated (see Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2), the mismatch between students' and teachers' beliefs regarding the value of teacher- and self-correction of errors was appreciable and remained so across the ten week period. The emphasis of the teachers was on developing the students' independence in this area and learning how to self-correct. The students and teachers were in closer agreement on the issue of self-correction, and the questionnaire data also indicated a greater shift in the students' beliefs about self-correction of errors. This section explores the beliefs held by the teachers of the IAP class regarding error correction in relation to the philosophy of learner autonomy.
With regard to student self-correction of errors, the philosophy of autonomy in learning as developed by Vygotsky (1987), and subsequently by theorists and researchers in second language education (Holec 1985, Dickinson 1993), is indicated in the teachers’ interview comments. The teachers perceive their role in error correction quite differently from their students. Rather than being the source of correction, they emphasise developing students’ independence from the teacher through greater self-monitoring skills and that rather than just learning about language through error correction, the students can also learn to learn and empower themselves. Colin (Interview #1) stated this belief in the following way:

It’s, the, I don’t, I used to be terrible on, on correction, and I, I think I’ve learnt my lesson. I think, I think what we ought to focus on is empowering people to understand what’s wrong... I think that correction of errors achieves very little purpose, unless it’s explored.

Examination of this extract revealed two key features. First, Colin’s extensive use of first person singular pronouns seemed to reflect a personal, closely-held belief. It would seem that this exchange revealed what Burns (1996) categorised as a personal value or philosophy.

However, the normative influence of institutional philosophies was also apparent in the phrases, ‘I used to be terrible …’ and ‘I think I’ve learnt my lesson’, implying a value judgement of his practices. The influence of outside agents was appreciable in this extract. The institutional culture and current discourse in ELICOS centres, and in ESL generally, support a communicative and self-directed approach to language learning. A large majority of the teacher respondents in this study subscribed to this philosophy. It would seem that this discourse had a formative and almost censorious effect on the beliefs Colin held.

Finally, Rowena’s belief that the students learn to correct their own errors in a process of stages is closely linked to Vygotsky’s (1987) theory of developing autonomy. She
expressed the belief that the students need guidelines to progress through these stages (Rowena - Interview #1):

> I think you have to set up the guidelines for them to find it ... So I think it's like a stage process. Personal error correction, I think is in there, but if you don't set it up for them, they won't actually achieve what you want them to.

One factor implicated in the process of becoming more autonomous and independent of the teacher is learning to monitor and correct one's errors. Noteworthy, however, is Rowena's comment, 'what you want them to achieve'. While the teachers were fostering this autonomy, they still chose the path the students took.

The teachers' underlying beliefs with regard to language learning seemed to have an influence on their attitudes toward error correction and the frequency with which they correct students' errors. The teachers believed that students should be empowered by learning how to correct their own errors, rather than relying on the teachers as a source of error correction and evaluation. This philosophy of empowerment and autonomy will be explored in the next section through an examination of the teachers' beliefs and values about critical thinking.

### 4.3.2 Teachers' beliefs about critical thinking

As noted in Section 4.2.3, at the beginning of the course, the students perceived their needs in terms of linguistic features, describing them mostly by reference to macro skills (writing, reading, etc). The teachers, however, expected the students to learn a much wider range of skills during the course. They believed that the students may have been aware of their specific areas of need in language development, but were largely ignorant of the existence of a logic and an academic culture very different from what they had experienced to that point. A salient feature of this academic culture was the ability to analyse and critically evaluate information.
When asked what constituted critical thinking, or how they would define it, Rowena used terms such as ‘cognitive process’, ‘analyse’ and ‘think for themselves’. Colin emphasised ‘empowerment’, ‘self-evaluation’, ‘critical reflection’ and ‘being able to think about issues’. The focus was on cognition, autonomy and empowerment in developing critical thinking, with little reference to the influence of culture.

The concept of critical thinking is introduced to the students in the first few weeks of the course. Both teachers stated the belief that learning critical thinking skills was vital for the students’ further study. However, while arguing for its value, both teachers seemed to distance themselves from the issue as shown in Extracts 4.9 and 4.10.

**Extract 4.9 Colin - Interview #1 (Week 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Mm hm. Do you think there’s an element of critical thinking that’s vital in that that students don’t have in, in...?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ah, I’ve read quite a lot of the literature and some people say that the, the oriental model of learning is y’know, sort of, that hackneyed business of, of, sort of absorption and rearticulation and so on...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Mm hm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Um, I don’t hold with that all that strongly, but I’ve seen it happen too often to not believe in it at all, but I believe a lot of learning does go on, and a lot of, a lot of, yeh, a lot of learning goes on, but the learning’s not tested... they aren’t asked to test the knowledge that they’ve gained, so they’re not asked to personalise it...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>or self monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>or self monitor or reflect. So the notion of critical thinking, ah, becomes pretty important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this instance, Colin distanced himself from a belief in an ‘oriental model of learning’ and embraced it at the same time. He used the metadiscursive marker ‘sort of’ to ‘hedge’ (Brown & Levinson 1978) and mark the expressions ‘oriental model of learning’ and ‘absorption and rearticulation’ as somehow inadequate conceptions or expressions. In fact, he distanced himself even further from the latter expression by adding ‘that hackneyed business’.

However, Colin did go on to state a belief that some degree of learning did occur for the students in his class within the ‘oriental model’. It would seem that he was
presenting himself as an objective, informed practitioner, who was critically aware of, but not totally in agreement with, the stereotypes that are present in ESL regarding Asian learners. He seemed to be distancing himself from the 'culture' argument; the relationship between cultural background and critical thinking as argued in the literature review (Adamson 1993).

Furthermore, it would seem that Colin was caught between two 'discourses'. On the one hand, it was important to contrast the learning cultures the students had experienced in their own countries with the western academic culture for which he believed the students required preparation, via the IAP course. This can be interpreted as the discourse of the institutions of ELT including this ELICOS centre, justifying courses such as IAP. The other discourse can be seen to be the expression of his own personal philosophy, as categorised by Burns (1996). This discourse is influenced by personal teaching experience, and attempts to affirm the learning the students have achieved in their own cultures.

A second example of the distance the teachers placed between themselves and the value placed on the acquisition of critical thinking skills is shown in Extract 4.10.

**Extract 4.10 Rowena - Interview #2 (Week 10)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>And of course in many of their cultures they’re not encouraged to do that [think for themselves] for various reasons and I think that’s why it’s just so foreign. And I think that’s why there’s so much emotional resistance to it. Y’know, like, there’s all sorts of inculcated reasons why they shouldn’t do that.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>And you come along and you say if you don’t do this you’re not going to pass anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An initial interpretation of the last comment in this exchange seems to indicate that the teacher actually speaks to the students in a bald, almost impolite manner. It would seem that she was being very direct and open to both myself, as a researcher, and to her students about her pragmatic belief in the value of teaching critical thinking skills. However, across the extract there was a shift from the first person, 'And I think ...', to the second person, 'You come along and you say ...'. This shift in person may reflect some conflict between her beliefs and her practices; the understanding of the
socioeducational contexts from which the students have come versus the pragmatic considerations of preparing the students for their future study. At one level, she could interpreted as adopting the discourse of the institution and context in which she teaches; ‘you come along and say’ being the voice of the outside discourse. At the same time, however, the formulation and expression of her own beliefs prefaced by, ‘I think...’ is in evidence.

Often during the interviews, Rowena expressed her wish to not change the students’ beliefs. She recognised that a set of beliefs, values and thought processes different to what the students had previously been exposed to, were presented in the IAP course, and that the students, to some degree needed to accommodate these to ensure their success at university. However, she maintained that it was not the aim of the course to change the students’ beliefs. This paradox will be investigated in more detail in the following section.

4.3.3 Teachers’ beliefs about the process of enculturation.

As noted and discussed in the literature review and section 4.3.2 of this study, the classroom practice of teachers is not simply a reflection of their stated beliefs. The context in which teachers work may constrain how their values and beliefs translate into classroom practice.

Different themes were in evidence in the teachers’ discussions about the process of change the students experience. Rowena often expressed her wish not to change the students’ beliefs, but to make them aware of the existence of a different world view. In any sentence in the first interview, where Rowena used phrases relating to changing or challenging the student’s beliefs (Appendix D) she included words such as ‘not’, ‘nothing’ and ‘wouldn’t’. It would seem that the desire to avoid changing the students was strong, and that if they did change, she perceived it as a personal, autonomous decision on the part of the students.
Whilst stating the belief that students could make a critical, independent decision regarding the adoption of critical thinking skills and a Western world view, she also recognised the influence she believed teachers have in that process;

**Extract 4.11 Rowena - Interview #1 (Week 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Mm hm.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yeh, and maybe they would value your view more than the people, the other students..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Of course they would. Yeh. Cos there's still that underlying respect for the teacher's knowledge, kind of thing, which is very common, I think, among students from Asia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Herein lies the conflict. According to Rowena, one aim of the IAP course was to 'open the students' to other world views and if change in their beliefs or mode of thinking occurred, it was a personal choice. However, she recognised that the teacher has an influence on her students, particularly because of the cultural background of the students and the beliefs they held regarding the authority of the teacher. This influence seemed to be in evidence in the student data in the manner in which the students spoke of the teachers 'making' them do critical thinking and self-correction of errors and also in the way in which the students accepted the perceived necessity to adopt these skills. A tension between the teacher's belief that the students had a choice whether to accept other world views, and the students' perceived a lack of choice is evident.

Colin's statements regarding possible change affected in the students also reflected a certain conflict or ambiguity. In the first interview, Colin both identified and distanced himself from his belief that a students' cultural background affects the development of their critical and evaluative skills. In the second interview he distanced himself even further from this belief, describing it as a 'self-evaluative, reflective construct which is not culture bound'. It would seem that a shift had occurred. He wished to align himself more with the notion of critical thinking as a cognitive construct, not a cultural or social one and if students change with regard to using critical thinking skills, this is not a cultural shift, but a cognitive one.
Colin's belief that during their course of study the students experienced a sense of alienation from their own culture, but not an adoption of the new culture, is exemplified in extract 4.12.

**Extract 4.12 Colin - Interview #1 (Week 2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>They feel very much, they become alienated from their own culture, and they don't really develop any new links with the new culture, with anything more than a passing sense.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Mm hm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>And I suspect that ... ultimately the only thing we can do is to introduce them to the culture of learning and the expectations of that particular culture and rather than try and give them any sense that they have an understanding of the community within which they live, but that we can, if we focus only on the community within which they study, that we shrink the whole exercise a bit, and give them a much greater sense of being able to master it, in a sense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this exchange, Colin used the metadiscursive marker 'sense' four times. It would seem that he intended to express a diminished capacity of the students to immerse and involve themselves in their adopted culture, and that any perception they might have of adopting this culture was somewhat illusory, just a 'sense that they have an understanding'.

Colin's belief seemed to be that cultural change in a person is difficult and transitory. If this is so, critical evaluation cannot be perceived as culture-bound, because if it were, the aims of a course such as IAP are unrealistic and unachievable. If critical thinking involves adopting a different, culturally-based world view, then second language learners in an academic course would not be able to master those skills and function successfully in a western academic environment. This may reflect a pragmatic acceptance on his behalf of the discourse of the institution and context in which he works, similar to that described by Benesch (1993).

### 4.3.4 Implications of findings about teachers' beliefs

With regard to error correction, the teachers in the focus group emphasised empowerment of the students and exploration of errors, leading to independence from the teacher. The teachers' emphasis on empowerment, independence and autonomy in students would seem to stem from an ideology of education which values the
individual who is able to learn independently and critically evaluate information rather than depend on and refer to 'knowledgeable others'.

At the beginning of the course, both teachers stated their beliefs that the students in IAP were likely to be aware to some degree of their linguistic needs, but were generally ignorant of the research and academic skills, such as evaluative, critical thinking, a course such as this addresses. Critical thinking, as a set of skills, was introduced and taught to the students from the outset of the course and both teachers actively promoted it in class. While they declared their belief in its importance, they also seemed to place some distance between themselves and what was perceived to be the institutional discourse. It may be that they felt constrained by the pragmatic need for teaching evaluative skills and the institutional values associated with these skills, while still aiming to recognise and affirm the educational and cultural backgrounds of their students.

The teachers seemed reluctant to view the fostering of critical thinking ability as anything other than a cognitive exercise. Two further views were expressed by the teachers. Firstly, if students change with regard to using critical thinking skills, this is not a cultural shift, but a cognitive one. This belief seemed to support the view that cultural change is difficult to achieve and/or maintain. Secondly, that if students did change their world view, whilst it may be a cultural shift for them, it was an independent choice. This notion of choice, whilst being in concordance with an autonomous perspective, was in conflict with the view presented by the students, who felt they had little choice but to adapt.

It seemed that the teachers faced a number of issues. On the one hand, they wished to recognise the value of the students’ prior learning, but on the other, they perceived a gap between the academic skills that would be expected of the students at a Western university and those they had come equipped with. Next, there seemed to be a wish to not change the students culturally, but to provide them with a different world view and the option to take on some of these values, beliefs and logic if they wished. However, it was recognised by the teachers that in the students’ view, the teacher held a position
of authority and thus could have a substantial influence on the students, which put into question the level of independence the students would have in these choices.

This is a complex issue. The students came to Australia with the express intention of studying at university here. The compulsion they felt to adapt can be seen as a pragmatic consideration in their preparation for academic success. However, the influence of the teachers’ beliefs was also implicated.

Finally, the beliefs of the teachers seemed to be expressed via two different discourses. The first of these was what Burns (1996) referred to as personal philosophies; the beliefs held personally by the teachers, gained from experience and normalised by the community of practitioners with whom they work. The second discourse was interpreted as the discourse of the institution and was often expressed in a form which was more distanced from the teachers.

4.4 Conclusion

This study utilised a variety of data collecting tools, which brought both a broad perspective from a larger group of students and teachers in this ELICOS context, as well as a more detailed and fleshed description of the beliefs and values of the three students and their teachers in an IAP class.

Investigation of the participants’ beliefs about error correction in the classroom showed that teachers and students seemed to have differing beliefs. The students believed teacher error correction was fundamental to their language learning, and while their comments reflected an acceptance of the need to self-correct, they also referred back to the teacher as the authority and expected their errors to be corrected by the teachers. The emphasis of the teachers was on developing the students’ ability to self-correct, emphasising independence, autonomy and empowerment.
The analysis of the language data evidenced what seemed to be the expression of beliefs in two different discourses: that of the students’ prior educational experiences and that of the context in which they were now taking part. It seemed that the students were experiencing some change or enculturation in the form of assimilation of beliefs and values. Whether or not this change was at a cultural level was of concern to the teachers, who wished to affirm the sociocultural backgrounds of their students. This dilemma seems to be at the core of the concerns explored in this study about the socialisation of students into a Western academic culture.

Within the scope of the philosophy of autonomy and empowerment, the issue of critical thinking and its value in the IAP class was central. At the beginning of the course, both teachers stated their belief that the students in IAP were generally ignorant of the need to develop evaluative and critical thinking ability. This seemed to be the case for the focus students, who identified critical thinking as a major difference between the education style they had been accustomed to in Indonesia and that which they were experiencing here in the language centre.

The degree to which this difference in academic culture was salient to the individual students appeared to depend somewhat on the length of time they had spent studying in Australia. While the students appeared to share similar beliefs about the teacher’s role in error correction and to accept the importance given by the teachers to become more autonomous by developing self-correcting and critical thinking skills, they seemed to differ in the case with which they dealt with the change. Spack’s (1997) argument that students’ orientation to learning is a dynamic interaction of cultural, individual and contextual factors rings true. The interaction of these factors requires further investigation.

Three key issues were in evidence with regard to critical thinking and change in the IAP class. Firstly, the students accepted the value placed by the teachers on these evaluative and analytical skills, endorsing the learning and thinking style the teachers
were promoting as necessary for success at university. Whilst they did not always find it easy to attain these skills, the students were open to change.

Secondly, a certain tension and ambiguity in the teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of critical thinking emerged as salient in this study. While they declared their belief in its importance, they also seemed to place some distance between themselves and the institutional discourse of critical thinking. The ambiguity in the teachers' expression of their beliefs seemed to indicate two different levels of beliefs; their personal beliefs and those influenced by the context in which they were operating.

Finally, and possibly most significantly, is the paradox regarding change. The teachers were confronted with the task of preparing the students for university. They saw gaps and barriers between what the students come to the course with and what they will require for success in their further studies. The teachers perceived a need to engender autonomy in their students, but the dilemma seemed to be how to do this without encroaching on students' right to choose. Furthermore, although they did not intend to change the students, they conceded that adoption of critical thinking through exposure to a range of issues, and the development of the students' evaluative skills, might bring about some change. As Atkinson (1997) points out, the question that remains is whether or not students can be taught these skills without accommodating a particular (Western) world view.

It seemed that to solve this dilemma, the teachers had developed personal theories about the nature of learning in IAP. One teacher stated the belief that incorporating these evaluative and critical skills into one's thought system was cognitive, not cultural. The other teacher expressed the belief that if the students do change, then it is a choice that they make, in an autonomous fashion.

Change in the students' beliefs and values was evidenced and the influence of the teachers and the culture in which they operate was implicated. It would seem that in this context, what the teachers do is not neutral, it is cultural and social as well as
cognitive and academic, but the navigation between the discourses of the institutions in which they operate and their own personal theories is not a simple matter.
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

In Chapter 1 I stated that the aim of this study was to investigate students’ and teachers’ beliefs about autonomy in language learning with three goals in mind. The first goal was an enhanced mutual understanding of the beliefs and expectations the participants bring to a ten week language course. A second goal was to map changes which may have occurred in the students’ beliefs over the duration of the course and investigate the factors implicated in these changes. The final goal was to better understand what teachers do and how they conceive of their work, constructed by the context in which they work.

Change in the students’ beliefs and values was evidenced and the influence of the teachers and the culture in which they operate was implicated in the language of the students. As exemplars of Western academic culture, the teachers emphasised empowerment of the students through self-exploration of errors, leading to independence from the teacher. The students’ beliefs that teacher error correction was fundamental to their language learning, and an implied reliance on the teacher’s knowledge and authority, remained fairly constant across period of the course. The data indicated a greater shift in the value students placed on self-correction of errors.

The authority of the teachers and their recommendations was also a key factor implicated in the students’ adoption of the belief in the importance of critical thinking. Evident in the students’ comments was a need to adapt to the context in which they were now studying and take on the values regarding autonomy and self-reliance in language learning dominant in this learning environment. The analysis of the language data evidenced what seemed to be the expression of beliefs in two different discourses: that of the students’ prior educational experiences and that of the context in which they were now taking part. Whilst it seemed that the students had adopted some of the values of the academic culture in which they were studying, some
distance was still placed between themselves and the discourse of the dominant culture.

The beliefs of the teachers also seemed to be expressed via two different discourses; the personal beliefs held by the teachers, and the discourse of the institution. While the teachers declared their belief in the importance of critical thinking, they also seemed to place some distance between themselves and what was discerned as the institutional discourse. They seemed reluctant to view the fostering of critical thinking ability as anything other than a cognitive exercise. Furthermore, if students did develop critical and evaluative skills, this was perceived either as a cognitive (not cultural) shift, or as an independent choice on the part of the students. This notion of choice concords with an autonomous perspective, but was in conflict with the view presented by the students, who felt they had little choice but to adapt and adopt.

The paradoxes outlined in Chapter 1 were played out in this context. While the teachers wished to affirm the cultural diversity of the students in their class, they perceived a need to equip the students with a particular world view which would assist them in achieving their goals. They wished to empower their students by giving insights into Western academic culture in which the notion of autonomy is embedded, but without diminishing the value of the academic culture from which they had come.

The next section draws implications from these conclusions and recommendations are made regarding classroom practice and teacher development.
5.2 Implications and recommendations for practice

5.2.1 Classroom practice and students’ beliefs

This study foregrounded some areas in which students’ and teachers’ beliefs about the value of autonomy were different. In the case of error correction, the mismatch between the students’ and teachers’ beliefs led to a tension between how often the students preferred to be corrected and how often the teachers wished to correct them. The importance of understanding the students’ beliefs and preferences is evident. On the basis of this, I would recommend that teachers take time to explore the beliefs held by the students in their class, giving attention to the affective needs of the students.

What also became evident in this study was the individual nature of the students involved. Generalisations are often made about a particular type of student. However, teachers must constantly remind themselves of how different each student is, and how the beliefs and values held by that student, while reflecting a particular cultural background, are still unique to that person. By exploring the beliefs held by their students teachers are able to better understand their individual language learning processes.

Finally, I would recommend that teachers take the time for students to examine and explicitly state their goals. If a Western education is what they value, then it is probably wise to acknowledge and discuss the difficulties they are likely to face. One facet of Western academic tradition is the aim of autonomy and the ability to be critical and evaluative, and since students may not have the power to influence the academic culture to which they aspire, they may need to be pragmatic about the adoption of its values. However, teachers should also aim to help students to develop the authority to be critical of the academic culture in which they will operate.
5.2.2 Classroom practice and teachers' beliefs

Another implication of the first recommendation is that teachers should be open about their own beliefs about language learning. They need to be aware that what they do cannot be neutral and is not simply cognitive and academic. It is situated in a cultural, social and political context, which impacts on their beliefs and values and the expression of those beliefs through their work. By stating their beliefs and values, they may enhance mutual understanding between themselves and their students. Furthermore, the explicit statement of expectations and objectives by both students and teachers will assist in the realisation of mutually developed goals.

The philosophy of autonomy which seems to be embedded in this and wider academic contexts needs to be made explicit to students. Whilst the students remain powerless participants in this institutionalised discourse, they cannot become truly autonomous. It would seem that autonomy for the students needs to be offered and fostered via the teaching of critical thinking and the development of self-monitoring, but at the same time, the students need room to move and time to evaluate the changes asked of them. Furthermore, if the students are to be truly empowered, then the system, which seems to dictate which values, beliefs and skills to adopt, needs to be made more receptive to their voice and perspective. The implication of this is that if teachers aim to develop autonomous and evaluative students, the culturally influenced philosophies and premises from which they work must be open to evaluation and analysis.

Finally, the process of adaptation and change was described as difficult and stressful by the students. While the focus may be on the language and academic development of the students, teachers must be mindful of the emotional issues involved in the process of learning. More acknowledgment needs to be made of the stress and anxiety that students experiencing change of this nature may undergo.
5.2.3 Teacher reflection

The teachers in this study showed an ability and willingness to reflect, articulate and evaluate their beliefs, and feedback indicated that this was a fruitful exercise, worthy of more attention. In this field, where language teachers often regard themselves as practical people (Stern 1983) constrained by the time limits of a cycle of 10-week courses, the opportunity for reflection and discussion is limited. However, if we are to open our philosophies and practices to evaluation and critique, it would seem that exercises such as this one are of great benefit. By uncovering the beliefs we hold, the institutional factors impacting on those beliefs and how we express our beliefs through the meanings that they give to our work, we are more able to understand and act upon the paradoxes we face in our work in a manner consonant with our values.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

Whilst much of the research into the nature of beliefs is contradictory, two themes are common. Firstly, beliefs are difficult to define, measure and isolate and secondly, that whilst beliefs are individual in nature, the influence of culture and context is seen as central. More recently, it has been recognised that while research and theory that is broad-based is useful, examination of particular contexts and interpretation of the relationship between the context and beliefs yields more in-depth understanding.

This study investigated one particular context, investigating a group of learners and teachers within the ELICOS centre in which they work and study. However studies in a variety of settings need to be carried out to further our understanding of students’ and teachers’ beliefs and the contextual, cultural and political factors implicated in this study.

Whilst longitudinal in aspect, this study only mapped the beliefs of students and teachers over a 10-week period. This time frame is short compared to the length of
time these students will be studying in this foreign culture. There is a need for research which tracks students across a longer period of time and, if possible, from one learning environment to another. By doing this, a greater depth of insight into the nature of the change students experience, particularly with regard to autonomy in learning, can be achieved. In a field that is currently concerned, to a large degree, with preparing language students for the transition to Western academic life, the impact of fostering autonomy and the degree to which we can ‘teach’ our students to be autonomous is critical.

Finally, the relationship between teachers’ beliefs, the context in which they work and their classroom practice needs to be further explored. Research which is classroom-based can investigate how teachers go about their daily business of teaching in relation to the beliefs they hold. By exploring how beliefs give meaning and shape to classroom work, and how contextual influences affect those beliefs, deeper insights into the nature of language teaching and learning may be gained.
Student Questionnaire
BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

Thank you for helping in this research into students' beliefs and preferences by answering the following questions.

Student No: ____________________________
Class: ____________________________
Nationality: ____________________________
Sex (please circle) Male Female
Length of time studying English in home country: ____________________________
Where did you study English in your country? (eg high school, university) ____________________________
How long have you been studying English in Australia? ____________________________
What are your most important reason(s) for studying English now? (Please give no more than two reasons). ____________________________

SECTION 1
Read each question and then decide if you:
(1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree,
(4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree
There are no right or wrong answers; we are simply interested in your opinions. Mark each answer by circling the number.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Some languages are easier to learn than others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I believe I will learn to speak English very well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I take every opportunity I can to practice speaking English with other English-speakers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Learning a second language is different from learning other school subjects.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning a second language is learning vocabulary words.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>It is important to repeat and practice a lot.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>It is easier to speak than to understand a second language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I would like to learn English well so that I can get to know English-speakers better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>People in my country feel that it is important to speak English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I feel shy speaking English with other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>It is easier to read and write a language than to speak and understand it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>If you are allowed to make errors in English in the beginning, it will be difficult to speak correctly later on.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>English is structured in the same way as my language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning another language is learning the grammar.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>It is important to practise with cassettes in the language lab.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please circle your answer for questions 23 & 24:

23. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?

   (a) less than a year
   (b) 1-2 years
   (c) 3-5 years
   (d) 5-10 years
   (e) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.

24. English is:

   (a) a very difficult language
   (b) a difficult language
   (c) a language of medium difficulty
   (d) an easy language
   (e) a very easy language.

25. What do you believe are the most important skills in language learning?

   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

26. Which of these skills do you expect to learn in the classroom during the next ten weeks?

   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
APPENDIX A

SECTION 2
LEARNING PREFERENCES
How do you learn best?
Read each statement and decide how useful you believe each one is for your language learning.

(1) very useful ..............................................(5) not at all useful

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In class I like to practise conversation skills by speaking with the teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I want to write everything in my notebook.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I like the teacher to explain grammar rules to us.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In class I like the teacher to correct all my errors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I like to learn English by studying by myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I think it's useful to learn by talking in pairs to other students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I like to work in small groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Whole class discussions about current issues are useful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I like to go out with the class and practise English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I learn better when the language activities are fun.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I think giving oral presentations is useful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I think it's important to learn a lot of new vocabulary in class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE 1

How important do you think it is to do the following:

(1) very important ............................................(5) not at all important

<p>| | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. When I don’t understand something in class, I ask someone to explain it to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. When I’m reading, if I don’t understand a word, I try to understand it by looking at the whole sentence.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Use my English in most situations, even if I make mistakes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. If someone doesn’t understand me, I try to say it in a different way.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Think about what I am going to say before I speak.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. (a) What are the most useful activities for your language learning that you have experienced in English classes in the past?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

(b) How or why do you think they have helped you learn English?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

19. What have been the least useful activities for language learning?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

20. Please think about and complete this sentence:

I learn best when

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Teacher Questionnaire
BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

Dear brave participant (to whom I am eternally grateful),
Thank you for helping in this research into students’ and teachers’ beliefs and preferences by answering the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers; we are simply interested in your opinions.

Name (optional): __________________
(Please include if you are happy for me to involve your class further in this study)

Class (optional): __________________
(Please include if you wish the data from your survey to be collated with that of the students in your class):

SECTION 1

Read each question and then decide if you:
(1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree
Mark each answer in the box.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>It’s OK to guess if you don’t know a word in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning a second language is learning vocabulary words.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>It is easier to read and write a language than to speak and understand it.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>If you are allowed to make errors in English in the beginning, it will be difficult to speak correctly later on.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning another language is learning the grammar.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

(1) strongly agree .................................................................(5) strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Some languages are easier to learn than others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>It is important to practise with cassettes in the language lab.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>It is important to repeat and practice a lot.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Learning a second language is different from learning other</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academic subjects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>It is easier to speak than to understand a second language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning English is learning how</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to translate from one's native language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?
   (a) less than a year
   (b) 1-2 years
   (c) 3-5 years
   (d) 5-10 years
   (e) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.

17. English is:
   (a) a very difficult language
   (b) a difficult language
   (c) a language of medium difficulty
   (d) an easy language
   (e) a very easy language.

18. What do you believe are the most important language skills or learning skills for students to learn at this level?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

19. Which of these skills do you realistically expect the students to learn in the classroom during the next ten weeks?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
### TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

**SECTION 2  
TEACHING PREFERENCES**

What is your opinion of each of the activity types listed below;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Excellent; very useful for language learning</th>
<th></th>
<th>(5) Not at all useful for language learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Practising conversation skills in teacher-whole class situation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Giving students time to copy down everything into their notebooks.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Explaining grammar points to the students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Correction of all student errors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Allowing the students to find their own mistakes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Learning in pairs through student-student interaction.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Problem-solving in pairs or groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Going out with the class to practise English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teaching a lot of vocabulary.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Class discussions of topical issues.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Working in small groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Oral presentations by students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Making learning activities fun.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B

## TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

**How important is it for students to:**

(1) very important .................................................(5) unimportant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ask someone to explain when they don’t understand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>When reading if they don’t understand a word, try to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understand it by looking at the whole sentence.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Use English in most situations, even if they make mistakes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Think about what they are going to say before speaking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Reformulating their speech when they are not understood.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

19. (a) What do you expect will be the most useful activities for language learning for students at this level?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

(b) How or why do you think they will help your students learn English?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

20. This survey details only a small range of beliefs regarding language learning. Do you have any further comments which you would like to make regarding your beliefs about language learning? (For example, you may wish to consider and complete: Language students learn best when...)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

78
Student Questionnaire  (End of course)
BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

Thank you for helping in this research project by answering the questions below.
There are no right or wrong answers; we are simply interested in your opinions. Mark each answer by circling the number.

Student No: __________________
Class: ___________
Nationality: ____________________

SECTION 1
Read each question and then decide if you:
(1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree,
(4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Some languages are easier to learn than others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I believe I will learn to speak English very well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I take every opportunity I can to practice speaking English with other English-speakers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Learning a second language is different from learning other school subjects.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If I learn to speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>The most important part of learning a second language is learning vocabulary words.</td>
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<td>It is important to repeat and practice a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>APENDIX C</strong></td>
<td><strong>STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1) strongly agree ......................................................... (5) strongly disagree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I would like to learn English well so that I can get to know English-speakers better.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>People in my country feel that it is important to speak English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I feel shy speaking English with other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>If you are allowed to make errors in English in the beginning, it will be difficult to speak correctly later on.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>English is structured in the same way as my language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning another language is learning the grammar.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>It is important to practise with cassettes in the language lab.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please circle your answer for questions 22 & 23:

22. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?
   (a) less than a year
   (b) 1-2 years
   (c) 3-5 years
   (d) 5-10 years
   (e) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.

23. English is:
   (a) a very difficult language
   (b) a difficult language
   (c) a language of medium difficulty
   (d) an easy language
   (e) a very easy language.
### APPENDIX C

### STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE 2

#### SECTION 2

**LEARNING PREFERENCES**

How do you learn best?

Read each statement and decide how useful you believe each one is for your language learning.

(1) very useful .............................................(5) not at all useful

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>In class I like to practise conversation skills by speaking with the teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I want to write everything in my notebook.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I like the teacher to explain grammar rules to us.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I like the teacher to give us problems to work on.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>In class I like the teacher to correct all my errors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I like to learn English by studying by myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I think it’s useful to learn by talking in pairs to other students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I like to work in small groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Whole class discussions about current issues are useful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I like to go out with the class and practise English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I learn better when the language activities are fun.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I think giving oral presentations is useful.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I think it’s important to learn a lot of new vocabulary in class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

15 (a) What do you believe are the most important things you have learned during this course?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

15 (b) Which (activities in or out of class) have helped you most to learn English during this course?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

16 (a) Could you please rank the five areas listed below from those you believe to be most useful to least useful.

1 = most useful  
5 = least useful

☐ improving my pronunciation

☐ teacher correcting my errors

☐ vocabulary development

☐ grammar practice

☐ learning how to find and correct my own errors

16 (b) Can you please explain why you chose your highest ranking area?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

16 (c) Can you please explain why you chose your lowest ranking area?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Rowena - Interview extract #1 (Week 2)

R  And also I think it’s really [emphasis] important to keep stressing, well not maybe keep stressing, but make sure that it’s clear to them that you’re not trying to give them a western perfect way of writing, or thinking, it’s just a culturally different one. Um, and, y’know, there’s ...

T  Mm, it’s a tool that they need to ...

R  Right.

T  To have to use.

R  Exactly. And, um, to get them to see that it’s different ways of looking at the world, different ways of looking at something, and that both are, have merit, and that both are important, but it’s the, the chasm that exists between it that causes conflict, often. And y’know it lends itself to that kind of discussion and I think that in their minds it helps them to see what the two are and helps them, perhaps, be more comfortable, because I think you’re also dealing with barriers that are very internal. ...

Y’know, you’re dealing with a lot of emotional things there as well, it’s not just an academic exercise and you’ve got to be really gentle with that and just present, well how westerners would view it, and not ask them to change, but just ask them to see. ... And I don’t think that you actually change anything, but it just opens them to other possibilities.

T  Do you think, you said nothing changes, do you think underlying beliefs of theirs change at all?

R  I hope not [laughs]. I don’t think we’re in the business to do that. I, I don’t know, um, I think that that’s entirely up to them and up to the individual, and y’know, you’re not trying. I wouldn’t want to be challenging beliefs, I just want to open them to another set of them. What they do with that, whether they reassess their own and change is entirely a personal process that really is not necessary for them to study here successfully.
REFERENCES


Parrino, A. 1987. *Correct me to tears: The importance of knowing the learner before correcting errors.* ERIC Document ED404876


Rokeach, M. 1968. **Beliefs, attitudes, and values; a theory of organisation and change.** San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.


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Devine, Teresa

Title:
Students' and teachers' beliefs about autonomy in language learning

Date:
1999-07

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39251

File Description:
Students' and teachers' beliefs about autonomy in language learning

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